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ABSTRACT

This booklet, designed for use by secondary social studies students and adult groups, describes three perspectives held by different groups on the immigration issue and examines the arguments for and against each of the arguments. The broadest and largest stream of immigrants since the 1920s has flowed into the United States since 1965. The perspective of the restrictionists is explored first. A chief concern of people holding this view is that newcomers may displace U.S. workers, depress wages, and contribute to poor working conditions. This is especially true of undocumented workers. The second group views immigration as beneficial to the United States. Members of this group hold that fears about "overcrowding" are hardly persuasive. The United States has the lowest population density of any developed nation. Also, immigrants do not take jobs; they make jobs. Studies have found that immigrants provide economic benefits. The third viewpoint concerns whether or not the immigrants can be assimilated into the culture. The United States is the sum total of a vast number of national differences. Members of the third group ask whether pluralism is at odds with U.S. interest in maintaining a core of common values, symbols, and social commitments. They point out that about one-half of all the people now coming to the United States speak Spanish. The United States has never before tried to absorb so many newcomers speaking the same foreign language. Among people who share this view, the concern is that Hispanics may remain a culture outside U.S. mainstream culture. (SM)

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NATIONAL ISSUES FORUM
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Immigration:

What We Promised, Where to Draw the Line

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As President Kennedy said, "To govern is to choose." The same thing might be said for every citizen in a democracy: to govern ourselves is to choose. But when you think about it, that is a very demanding expectation. Most conversations about public issues consist of little more than the airing of grievances, or comments from the sidelines on what elected leaders are doing — usually what they are doing wrong! It is not easy for most of us to understand important issues well enough to decide what is in the public interest. It is harder still to believe that anyone in public office is interested in hearing what we think and feel.

Yet, since it was formed five years ago, the Domestic Policy Association has been based on the conviction that citizens *can* engage in productive discussion about public issues and that elected leaders *are* interested in the outcome. The goal of these nonpartisan forums is to stimulate and sustain a special kind of conversation, a genuinely useful debate that moves beyond the bounds of partisan politics, beyond the airing of grievances to mutually acceptable responses to common problems.

The DPA represents the pooled resources of a nationwide network of organizations — including libraries and colleges, churches and membership groups, service clubs and community organizations. Last year, some 200 convening institutions in 46 states organized community forums as part of this effort called the National Issues Forum and we anticipate that those numbers will continue to grow. These are nonpartisan meetings in which citizens discuss specific policy issues. Each year, convenors choose three topics for discussion. There is an issue book like this one for each of them, designed to frame the debate by laying out the choices and their respective costs.

This year's topics — crime, immigration, and the farm crisis — pose a special challenge. Each of them provokes an emotional response. For that reason, discussion tends to generate more heat than light. With regard to all three topics, there are sharp differences about the diagnoses of the problems as well as prescriptions about what should be done. The only thing that people seem to agree upon is that current policies aren't working as well as they should. The challenge in these forums is to see if we can "work through" some of our differences to find the common ground on which more effective policies can be based.

This past March, President Gerald Ford hosted a meeting at which leaders and citizens sat down together to discuss the outcome of the 1985 forums. As the meeting began, he pointed out what is distinctive about these forums and why leaders are particularly interested in their outcome. "If citizens are to arrive at a conception of the public interest, it is essential that there be nonpartisan forums such as these in which people who may not agree with each other get together to exchange their views. It is essential for people to find a way of speaking to elected officials not as representatives of special interests but as individuals lobbying for the public interest. Elected leaders *are* interested in what people think, particularly when they've taken the time to learn about the issues and ponder the choices."

Soon after the 1986 forums end, the DPA will once again convene a series of meetings to convey the results to leaders. One of those meetings, to be held in Atlanta at the recently completed Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, will be hosted by President Carter. The discussion will begin with a summary of what took place in the community forums. To make sure that your thoughts and feelings are reflected in that report, we have provided short questionnaires at the beginning and end of this book. Before you begin reading these materials and then after you have read this book or attended community forums on this topic, take a moment to fill out these questionnaires and mail them back to us, or hand them to your forum moderator.

So as you begin this issue book from the Domestic Policy Association, you are joining thousands of Americans in the fifth annual season of the National Issues Forum. As the editor of these books, I am pleased to welcome you to this common effort.

Keith Melville
Editor-in-Chief
National Issues Forum

1. Immigration: What We Promised, Where to Draw the Line

Before you read this book or attend the forums, please fill out this short questionnaire. We're particularly interested in how you change your mind on these questions once you've learned more about the issue and had a chance to think about it. So after the forums are over, or after you've finished reading this issue book, we'd like you to fill out a second short questionnaire which appears at the end of the book.

1. What priority do you think should be given to each of the following goals in efforts to reform our immigration system?

	High Priority	Lower Priority	Not a Priority	Not Sure
a. Reduce the number of immigrants who come to this country each year	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Make sure that no single ethnic or language group constitutes too large a portion of the total immigration to the U.S	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Admit a greater number of refugees fleeing from persecution	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Bring illegal immigration under control	☐	☐	☐	☐

2. Here are some things people have been saying about immigration at current levels. For each, indicate whether you agree or disagree:

	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
a. On balance, immigrants are good for our country; they work hard, and enrich our culture and economy	☐	☐	☐
b. We now take in about as many refugees as we can handle	☐	☐	☐
c. Recent immigrants are not assimilating as quickly as past waves of immigrants	☐	☐	☐
d. Considering our history as a nation of immigrants, we have an obligation to admit more immigrants than we do today	☐	☐	☐

3. Which of these age groups are you in?

Under 18 ☐
18-29 ☐
30-44 ☐
45-64 ☐
65 and over ☐

4. Are you a

Man ☐
Woman ☐

5. What is your zip code? _____

So that we can report what you think on this issue to local and national leaders, please hand this questionnaire to the forum leader at the end of the session, or mail it to the National Issues Forum at 5335 Far Hills Avenue, Dayton, Ohio 45429.

NATIONAL ISSUES FORUM

Immigration:

What We Promised, Where to Draw the Line

Prepared by the
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The Domestic Policy Association

The Domestic Policy Association is a nonprofit, nonpartisan association devoted to raising the level of public awareness and discussion about important public issues. It consists of a nationwide network of institutions — colleges and universities, libraries, service clubs, membership groups, and civic organizations — that bring citizens together to discuss public issues. The DPA represents their joint effort to enhance what they already do by working with a common schedule and common materials. In addition to convening meetings each fall in hundreds of communities in every region of the country, the DPA also convenes meetings at which it brings citizens and national leaders together to discuss these issues and the outcome of community forums.

Each year, participating institutions select the topics that will be discussed in the issue forums. On behalf of the Domestic Policy Association, the Public Agenda Foundation — a nonprofit, nonpartisan research and education organization that devises and tests new means of taking national issues to the public — prepares issue books and discussion guides for use in these forums. The Domestic Policy Association welcomes questions about the program, and invites individuals and organizations interested in joining this network to write to: The Domestic Policy Association, 5335 Far Hills Avenue, Dayton, Ohio 45429.

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As a nation, we are faced with far more applicants than we can admit. It is a difficult task to define a realistic admissions policy that does not compromise our ideals.

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Destination: America

"In the Statue of Liberty's centennial year, it is particularly appropriate to recall what America promised to immigrants and refugees, and to ask whether new realities require that those promises be redefined."

National monuments we have aplenty. But one — a 200-ton copper figure that gazes out over New York Harbor — is the uncontested favorite, a statue that for many evokes a very personal response. Conceived to celebrate the ties between France and the United States, neither the sculptor of this colossal statue entitled "Liberty Enlightening the World" nor the French donors who made it possible, nor indeed the American public, associated the image with the dream of a new life for "the huddled masses." Yet, early on, Lady Liberty came to signify a distinctively American ideal. Emma Goldman, the writer, made the association when, arriving as an immigrant in New York Harbor in 1886, she peered through the mist at the brand new statue. "Ah, there she was," Goldman wrote, "the symbol of hope, of freedom, of opportunity! She held her torch high to light the way to the free country, an asylum for the oppressed of all lands."

And that, of course, is what Lady Liberty stands for in the famous inscription that was attached to the statue a few years later: "Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free ... Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost, to me ... " The statue's gaze is determined, almost forbidding, yet the message is undeniably tender. Inspired by tales of refugees fleeing from anti-Semitic riots in Russia, Emma Lazarus, who wrote the poem affixed to the statue's base, characterized Lady Liberty as a "Mother of Exiles" promising "world-wide welcome."

In many ways, this promise of "world-wide welcome" defines who we are as a nation. Yet as we celebrate the centennial year of the Statue of Liberty, there are real disagreements about what our obligations are to those seeking to come here, and whether that promise conflicts with our desire to provide opportunities for the people who are already here. The centennial celebration is an occasion not just to renew century-old ideals, but to recast them in a form appropriate to the 1980s. In many respects, today's debate echoes the concerns and conflicting ideals regarding immigration that have been voiced since the early days of the Republic.

A Nation of Nations

This conception of America as a haven for those of all backgrounds — an "asylum," as Thomas Paine said, "for the persecuted lovers of civil and religious liberty from every part of Europe" — goes back to the earliest settlers, many of whom fled from religious persecution.

Ever since, America has been shaped and reshaped by successive waves of immigrants. Some of them were driven by persecution and hardship; others were drawn by ideals of democracy and liberty. In all, over two centuries, the United States has received — sometimes gladly and sometimes grudgingly — more than 50 million immigrants. This country remains by far the largest receiver of refugees and immigrants.

Statue of Liberty Gallery, N.Y., N.Y.

Liberty Bond poster, 1917

In many countries, the sense of nationhood depends on ethnic divisions that have existed for centuries. Germany and Japan, for example, are different from each other not only because they have their own governments and histories; they also have fundamentally different cultures, with distinctive customs and values. In recent years the Japanese have refused to accept more than a few thousand Indochinese refugees, mainly on the grounds that people from so alien a culture could not be assimilated, that they would remain outsiders. Australia, a spacious and democratic country, has accepted quite a large group of immigrants. But until 1973 it accepted mainly Europeans, and its ethnic character is still overwhelmingly British. The crowded and prosperous nations of Western Europe have based their immigration policies on a different principle. To meet a pressing need for labor in the 1950s and 1960s, they welcomed thousands of "guest workers." Yet the presence of those strangers was regarded as a temporary expedient. They were invited as sojourners, treated as something less than full-fledged citizens, and encouraged eventually to return home. What America has done distinctively is to adopt the idea that national origins can be ignored, and that diverse cultures can combine to create a uniquely strong and rich new society. Once Englishmen, Poles, Africans, or Thais, we are all Americans now.

Doubts about the Open Door

Neither the U.S. Constitution nor the Bill of Rights made any distinction between citizens and noncitizens except to place certain restrictions on who could hold public office. For more than a century, the United States was open to immigrants from all over the world, virtually without restriction.

Yet the very idea of inviting so many strangers and throwing all those customs and cultures into the "melting pot" is recklessly idealistic. It is not surprising that the idealism of a people who assert in their Declaration of Independence "that all men are created equal, and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights," has been accompanied since the early days of the Republic by an anxious concern. Soon after proclaiming it self-evident that all men are created equal, Thomas Jefferson admitted certain doubts as to whether they were all

well suited to become American citizens. He worried that they would soon turn the new nation into "a heterogeneous, incoherent, distracted mass." At the time, there were just two million Americans, and some 80 percent of them were from the British Isles.

Throughout the nineteenth century, with the arrival of successive immigrant waves, each larger and more heterogeneous than the last, this ambivalence became more marked. In the 25-year period from 1890 to 1914, at least 16 million immigrants were admitted, including the still-unmatched record of 1.3 million who came in 1907. To the dismay of some of the Northern Europeans who had arrived earlier, many of those newcomers were Eastern and Southern Europeans — Sicilians, Greeks, and Russian Jews fleeing the Czar's pogroms. The changing character of that transatlantic exodus fueled public pressure to restrict immigration.

Ironically, the installation of the Statue of Liberty — the symbol of "world-wide welcome" — roughly coincided with the beginning of an era of ethnic selectivity, and growing doubts about whether an "open door" was in the nation's best interest. Various restrictions were proposed in the 1880s, such as prohibiting the purchase of property by immigrants, and denying them public employment. In 1882, when it denied entry to Chinese immigrants, Congress enacted the first of a series of outright restrictions on immigration.

Despite those restrictions, by the turn of the century one-third of New York City's 3,500,000 residents were foreign born. The city was not so much a melting pot as a mosaic of cultural differences. Jacob Riis, the city's tireless chronicler, observed that "a map of the city, colored to designate nationalities, would show more stripes than on the skin of a zebra, and more colors than any rainbow."

This new wave of immigrants made an immeasurable contribution to the nation's economic growth and the settlement of its physical frontier. They built railroads, settled towns, wrote music, fought wars, dug mines. At the same time, the new immigration stirred both mistrust and fear. In 1891, the Secretary of the Treasury commented of the new immigrants that "they do not readily assimilate with our people and are not in sympathy with our institutions." The movement to place broad limits on immigration gained momentum.

In part, proposals to restrict the flow of immigration were motivated by the same concerns some people voice today: that immigrants took jobs away from Americans, that they lowered the wages paid to unskilled workers, and that their arrival in such large numbers threatened the nation's values and culture. In addition, some of the restrictionists were motivated by theories purporting to prove that race — defined as ethnic background — gave different peoples inherited traits that could not be overcome by environment.

Finally, with 50,000 newcomers a month seeking admission and anti-immigrant sentiments at their height, Congress passed the watershed Immigration Act of 1921, which defined annual limits on the number of aliens permitted from various foreign countries. When that law was stiffened in 1924, Congress took the additional step of creating the U.S. Border Patrol to control illegal immigration. The legislation of the 1920s, whose goal was to maintain the ethnic mix that existed at the time, substantially reduced Southern European immigration and denied entry to others. Consequently, the "open door" became a narrower gate. Some, particularly Asians, were shut out entirely.

With the passage of that legislation, many restrictionists considered the "immigration problem" solved. In a sense, it was. Total immigration declined substantially. The message of the Immigration Act was that foreigners in great numbers were no longer welcome. For the next 40 years, the spirit of that Act guided the nation's immigration policy.

A New Wave of Immigrants

Over the following several decades, immigration receded from public view. The fraction of foreign born in the U.S. population declined. As in the early 1800s, when few newcomers arrived, the languages and customs of the old country waned, and ethnic stereotypes faded. At the same time, there was mounting pressure to remove the discriminatory restrictions on immigration, and to devise a system which recognized the importance of immigration to American society and its economy.

In 1960, John Kennedy, a grandson of Irish Catholic immigrants who took pride in his ethnicity, was elected President. Kennedy was determined to discard the quota system that for several decades had favored European immigrants and excluded many others. "From the earliest days of our country," wrote Kennedy in a 1961 message to Congress on refugee legislation, "this land has been a refuge for the oppressed, and it is proper that we now, as descendants of refugees and immigrants, continue our long humanitarian tradition." In 1965, in memory of the late President, Congress voted to reform the old quota system, and create a new one that gave equal treatment to all countries.

On October 3, 1965, when President Lyndon Johnson signed the bill into law at a ceremony held at the base of the Statue of Liberty, he said that "it repairs a deep and painful flaw. . . . It will make us truer to ourselves both as a country and as a people." Although the new Immigration Act introduced certain restrictions on immigration, its chief message was that the "welcome" sign was out again, especially for Asians who had been excluded.

Since then, there has been a striking increase in the number of immigrants. Between 1965 and 1985, the number of people admitted to the United States almost doubled, to about 560,000 per year, not including refugees. Over that same period, the number of people entering illegally also increased.

The Promised Land

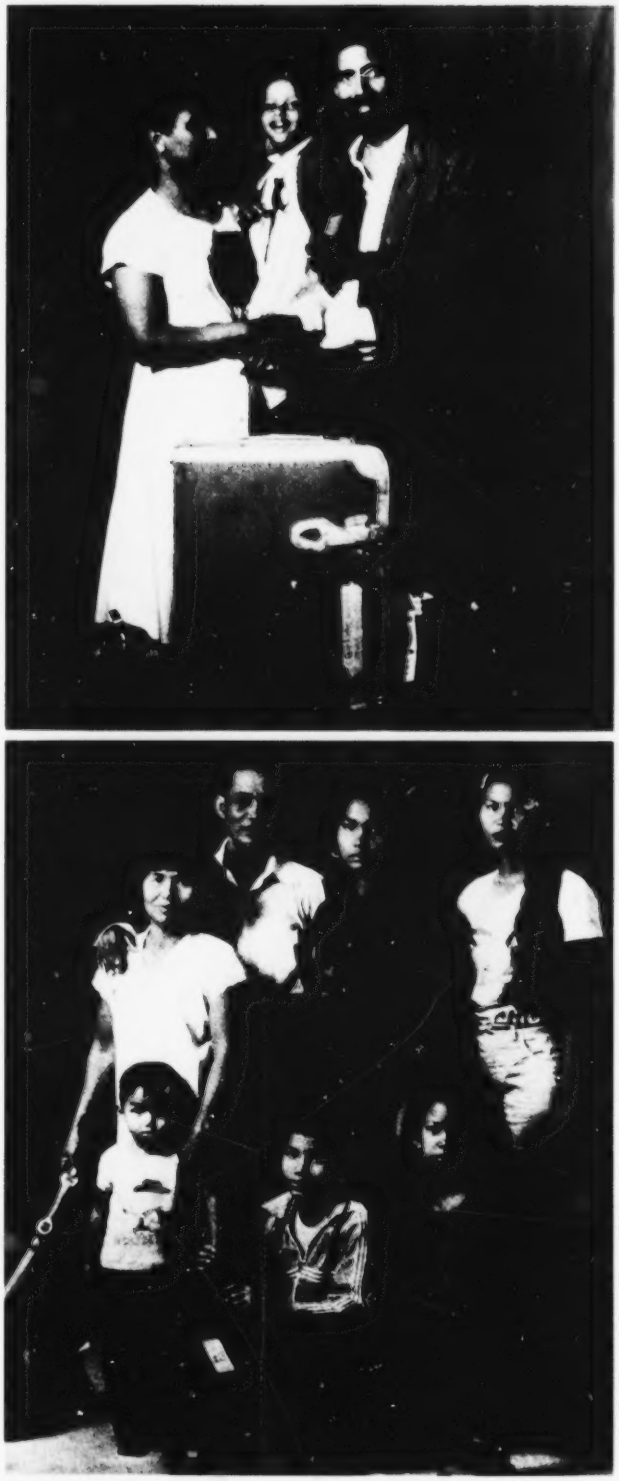
There are many reasons for the quickening pace of immigration since the 1960s, but one factor stands out. Widespread political strife, coupled with severe population pressures in developing nations where a growing work force far outstrips the available jobs, creates real pressure for migration. The preferred destination for many of today's emigrants, as for most of those at the turn of the century, is the United States.

Because of the difficulty of measuring the flow of illegal immigration, there is little agreement about numbers. But there is general agreement about this: more people are now trying to enter the United States — legally or illegally, to visit or to stay — than ever before. Some come on 747s and land at Los Angeles International Airport. Others arrive in "freedom flotillas" of small boats that sail to the Florida coast. Some arrive with money in their pockets, and are admitted because their relatives are already here. Or they cross the Rio Grande on a compatriot's shoulders, looking for work and hoping employers will ask no questions.

The new immigrants have been coming not only in larger numbers, but also from a larger number of nations. When the Immigration Act of 1965 was passed, more than half of the immigrants came from Europe and Canada. Since then, most of the new arrivals have come from Asia and Latin America. Of the 544,000 immigrants admitted legally to this country in 1984, the largest number (57,000) came from Mexico, followed by 42,000 from the Philippines, and 37,000 from Viet Nam.

Evidence of the new wave of immigration, the largest since the turn of the century, can be seen in many communities. On Chicago's Far North Side, algebra classes are conducted not only in English but also in Spanish, Cantonese, and Assyrian. In Santa Ana, California, along Bolsa Avenue, there are entire blocks of Vietnamese merchants. Officials in New York estimate that about 30 percent of the city's residents are foreign born, a larger percentage than at any time since the 1940s. After a period of some 40 years of low levels of immigration, recent immigrants are once again a very visible presence.

Some Americans are convinced that now, as in the past, the nation benefits from the vitality and resourcefulness of these newcomers, and conclude that immigration at current levels is an asset. But others are quite concerned about the presence of so many newcomers. Questions that were first posed when immigration surged to record highs in the early years of this century are being raised once again. Some labor leaders worry that the immigrant flow is adding to the unemployment problem. President Reagan has expressed his worry about a "tidal wave of refugees" that could inundate this country if communist subversion succeeds in Central America. Others are concerned that such a "tidal wave" could be a result of a combination of the overpopulation and severe economic troubles that plague our neighbors to the south.



Chuck Fishman/*Time* Magazine

These immigrants were photographed within an hour of their arrival in the United States, at New York's Kennedy Airport. Top: from Ethiopia, Nighisth Tecle, her husband Ghirmai, and their daughter; bottom: from Kampuchea, Soum Thy, her husband Choun Sem, and their five children.

Immigration Laws at a Glance

In 1985, the United States admitted more than 600,000 people to this country as immigrants. Some were refugees, fleeing oppression at home. But the majority were people who wanted to come to the United States to join their families or to make a better life for themselves.

The first step in immigrating to the U.S. is applying for a visa for permanent residence. This is the coveted "green card," which entitles the bearer to work and live in the U.S. permanently. Permanent residents have most of the rights and privileges afforded to citizens. However, they cannot vote, and they are prohibited from holding certain government jobs. After five years as a permanent resident, an immigrant can apply for citizenship.

People are admitted to the United States for any of three reasons: their relationship to American citizens or residents, the contribution they can make to the work force, and their need for refuge from oppression.

People admitted automatically:
Immediate family members of American citizens are admitted for permanent residence with no limit on how many can come each year. This includes husbands and wives, minor children and parents of citizens over 21.

People admitted in limited numbers:
The U.S. also admits up to 270,000 people over and above the automatic admissions each year. Of those 270,000, no more than 20,000 can come from any one country, and no more than 600 from a colony or territory. The visas for permanent residents are distributed according to a system of preference categories.

People given a high preference include the relatives of U.S. citizens, and spouses and unmarried children of permanent residents. Two of the preference categories allow members of the professions or persons of exceptional ability in the arts and sciences, and — as a lower preference — skilled and unskilled workers who have job offers and who can prove that U.S. workers are not available in their occupations.

Refugees admitted at the President's discretion:
The law specifies that a maximum of 50,000 refugees, individuals who are fleeing political persecution, can be admitted. That number can be raised by the President, in consultation with Congress, when circumstances warrant. After one year in this country, refugees can apply for permanent residence status.

Difficult and Divisive Questions

The growing debate over immigration has prompted political leaders to reassess the situation and devise new policies. The Immigration Reform Act, which contains certain provisions to stop the flow of illegal aliens, was first introduced in Congress in 1982, and has been repeatedly debated in a variety of forms. Yet, five years after the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy warned that the nation's policy is inadequate to deal with growing worldwide migration, and that steps should be taken to increase the number of people we accept and to control illegal immigration, Congress is still unable to pass legislation.

This inaction on the part of Congress reflects the public's indecisiveness about the immigration issue, and a lack of consensus about what kind of policy is in the nation's best interest. Some, like Governor Richard Lamm of Colorado, are convinced that because of new constraints the number of immigrants admitted has to be cut back. As the descendants of immigrants, we are blinded by promises made under different circumstances, says Lamm: "We have to get our hearts in line with our heads and our myths in line with our reality." Even if it seems selfish, Lamm asserts, "Our immigration policy has to be designed in the interests of the United States."

Others reply that immigration at current levels *is* in the interest of the United States, as well as in the interest of those who come here. From this perspective, we should not be trying to slow down the process of change but rather working to successfully incorporate this new wave of immigrants.

To think about immigration policy is to confront some difficult and divisive questions. As a nation, we value the principles of openness and pluralism. Yet we attach importance to other things as well, such as maintaining a situation in which citizens who want jobs can find them. We want to be generous and humane, yet we cannot be the "haven of last resort" for *all* of the world's oppressed. We honor the tradition of the "open door," yet we want to ensure that immigration is not at the expense of people already here.

The question is how to accommodate these various values, how to assign priorities among rights. What Senator Dale Bumpers (D-Ark.) said about the immigration bill — that it presents a "real dilemma, a conflict between our moral commitment to human rights, our humanitarian instincts, and our commitment to the first law of nature, which is self-preservation" — might be said about the entire immigration issue.

What Should Be Done?

Even a glance at the immigration reform bill confirms what experts in this area often acknowledge. Like the nation's tax laws, the immigration law has a bewildering complexity. At each turn in the congressional debate, there are technical issues

that require a good deal of expertise to understand. Yet the underlying issues are not technical matters but questions about values and about the priorities we attach to conflicting values.

For a nation that takes pride in its immigrant tradition, the question of how to regard a growing number of newcomers is especially difficult. Is it a problem that the level of immigration has increased? What are the implications of the shifting composition of the immigrant population? What are the costs and benefits of welcoming refugees? How much should we be concerned about the presence of undocumented aliens? While many people care passionately about the issue of immigration, there are real differences about each of these questions. No consensus exists about which aspect of this issue most deserves our attention, or what should be done.

This book describes three perspectives on the immigration issue, and examines the arguments for and against each of them. The first perspective we will examine is the view of people who conclude that, considering the costs imposed by these newcomers, it is in the nation's best interest to curtail the flow of immigrants. What matters to people who take this position is not only the number of recent immigrants. Their concern is also that the new immigrants are not becoming part of American society as did earlier waves of immigrants.

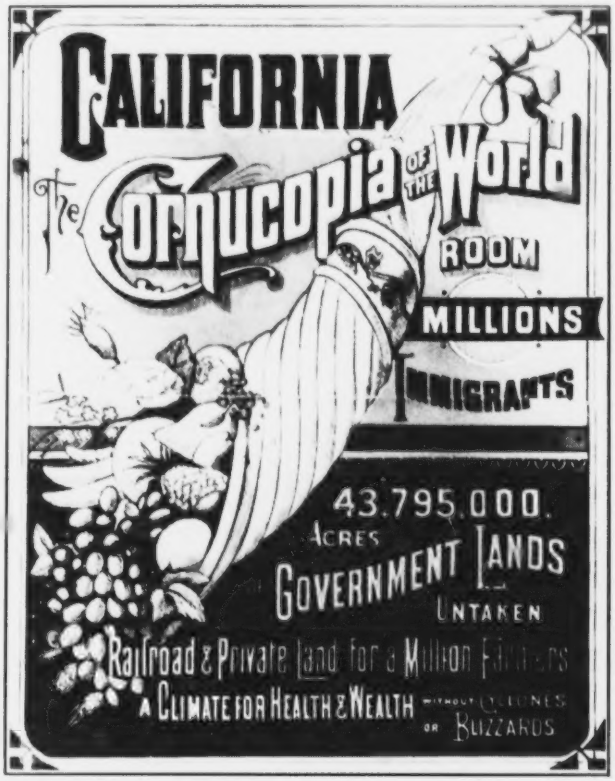
Proponents of a second perspective on immigration have quite a different concern. From their point of view, instead of cutting back on admissions, we should be honoring our historical commitment and providing refuge to more of those who are fleeing in desperation from economic or political difficulties.

Finally, we will turn to a third perspective on immigration, which is voiced by those whose chief concern is that the situation at the borders is largely out of control. Proponents of this view believe it is urgent to take steps to bring illegal immigration under control.

Each of these perspectives has its critics. In choosing among them, it is important to consider what those who disagree with these positions have to say and also to acknowledge that each of the initiatives proposed has certain costs. So this is a framework for debate, a series of choices.

For a hundred years, Americans have struggled with the question of who should be invited. Over the past five years, Congress has considered three different immigration reform bills, and on each occasion has been unable to agree upon a course of action. Meanwhile, the broadest and largest stream of immigrants since the 1920s flows into the United States. Americans are deeply divided as to whether this weakens or strengthens us, whether it demonstrates a laudable commitment to an open society or a lamentable inability to forge a policy that protects our self-interest.

For many, the first consideration is an intensely practical concern: What are these newcomers—legal and illegal—doing to us, and for us? That is where our examination of these three perspectives on immigration begins.



Courtesy of The New-York Historical Society, New York City

As in the nineteenth century, when posters such as this one were used to lure newcomers to states in need of labor and settlers, the U.S. remains to many immigrants the preferred destination.

"Immigration reform presents a real dilemma, a conflict between our moral commitment to human rights, our humanitarian instincts, and our commitment to the first law of nature, which is self-preservation."

—Senator Dale Bumpers

2

The Immigrant Effect

"Few people question the value of immigration at moderate levels. But is today's rate of immigration excessive? There are sharp differences about the effects of this recent wave of newcomers, what they are doing to us, and for us."

Early in 1986, a common concern was voiced in many of the border communities from Texas to California. Even in towns long accustomed to the flow of immigrants across the border, there was a new sense of urgency about the burden created by a swelling tide of immigrants on schools, hospitals, and other public facilities.

In El Paso, where about 20 percent of the patients at the county's general hospital are illegal aliens, medical costs are a major problem. Last year, that hospital wrote off $32 million in uncollected bills, many, according to the hospital's administrator, incurred by immigrants. That is one of the reasons why county taxes have risen by 40 percent over the past three years.

Five hundred miles down the Rio Grande in Laredo, public officials are also concerned about the effects of immigration. In Laredo, there is serious concern about the cost of educating some 700 new students from Mexico. Some of those students are illegal aliens. Others are resident aliens, or children born to Mexican parents who, because they were born in this country, are automatically entitled to U.S. citizenship. Since the Supreme Court ruled that all children who live here are entitled to a free education, illegal aliens as well as those who are here legally have a right to be in Laredo's public schools. Many of Laredo's citizens do not consider this to be an unreasonable or unacceptable burden. But questions are being raised about how this district, one of the poorest school districts in Texas, can afford to pay more than $2,000 a year to educate each of these new students. Ed Bueno, a spokesman for the Laredo Independent School District, said that the city's residents are mainly sympathetic with the aliens, but increasingly worried about the costs. "They see this big influx of kids," he said, "and they want to know how they're going to pay for it. We're a compassionate community. But you wonder when you have to say, 'We just can't take any more immigrants.'"

The same thing is being said about the impact of immigration on the job market. Some people claim that aliens take jobs that might have gone to citizens, that they depress wages, and encourage poor working conditions. Bumper stickers have begun to appear bearing the messages, "Illegal Aliens Take Our Jobs" and "Send Aliens Home."

The border towns feel the effects of immigration more directly than other communities. But the questions that have been raised along the border are being asked elsewhere as well. How is this new wave of immigrants — both legal and undocumented — affecting us? What are its costs and what are its benefits, for individuals and communities?

It would be easier to discuss that question if there were agreed-upon statistics regarding the total amount of immigration to the United States. The fact that so many come here illegally makes it extremely difficult to make an accurate estimate. Estimates of the undocumented immigrant population range from two to twelve million, and no one knows which end of that spectrum is closer to reality. The fact that no reliable

Bill Garner, *The Commercial Appeal*

figures exist about the number of illegal aliens who reside in the United States makes it difficult to assess their effects. But the immigration debate should not be diverted or delayed by the search for universally acceptable numbers.

To address the immigration question, exact numbers aren't necessary. A moderate estimate of current annual immigration levels includes some 500,000 to 600,000 immigrants admitted under the regular immigration laws, an additional 70,000 refugees, and some 400,000 illegals. When legal and illegal immigration are combined, roughly a million people are now being added to the population of the United States every year. That is roughly equal to the highest levels of immigration in our history, registered in the early decades of this century.

There is no agreement among those who want to restrict the flow of immigrants about what the right level is. But people who share this view are convinced that allowing immigration to continue at the current level is to invite more problems than we have the resources to solve, and to impose an unacceptable burden on ourselves.

New Realities, New Constraints

People who take this view contend that, at a time when America's economic "pie" has stopped growing, we have to approach the issue of immigration differently than we did in the past. In the words of Governor Richard Lamm of Colorado, "America in the 1980s is vastly different from America in the 1880s. It is not antihuman or antisocial to say that too many people can be a problem. It is simply realistic to acknowledge the fact."

The argument is that when the "welcome" sign was first displayed, circumstances were far different than they are today. In 1880, the U.S. population was still only 60 million (about one quarter of today's population), and there was land to spare. Successive waves of immigrants were drawn by the prospect of available land, jobs, and prosperity. Some, to be sure, had their hopes dashed by the circumstances they encountered. The streets of New York, they found, were *not* paved with gold. But for many immigrants, hard work, thrift, and enterprise brought rewards that were unimaginable in the Old World. As immigrants formed new enterprises, they helped the country become increasingly prosperous. Immigrants provided cheap labor, they increased land values, and provided a mass market for goods. Under those circumstances, it was unquestionably in the nation's interest to invite a substantial flow of immigrants.

But people who advocate restricting immigration argue that circumstances have changed. Today, there is a widespread concern for the "carrying capacity" of the land, and an awareness of limits — both to natural resources and to the number of new laborers the economy can absorb. Chronic labor shortages

J. P. Laffont/Sygma

Recent immigrants in Miami's garment industry, which faces competition from low-priced imports.

that led nineteenth-century entrepreneurs to import workers for such tasks as building the nation's railroads have given way to chronic unemployment.

As some see it, immigration policy has to be based on a realistic assessment of the nation's resources, and the demands placed on them by a growing population. Though the U.S. birthrate has dropped, this country still has one of the faster population growth rates among industrial nations. According to some estimates, as much as 50 percent of that growth is due to immigration, both legal and illegal. If immigration continues at current rates, it will add over 20 million people to the U.S. population between 1980 and the year 2000 — a figure equal to the combined 1980 populations of Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Phoenix, Houston, and Dallas.

"More people coming here," says Governor Lamm, "means more population pressure on our resources, more energy use, more traffic, more fertile farmland used for housing, more unemployment. More people means more water consumption. But we don't have any more water to give them." Because of their concern about limited resources, environmentalists and supporters of zero population growth have raised their voices in protest against a growing stream of newcomers.

Competing for Jobs

One of the chief concerns of people who are worried about the effects of immigration at current levels is that these newcomers may displace U.S. workers, depress wages, and contribute to poor working conditions. In their view, it doesn't make sense to admit relatively high levels of immigrants at a time of chronically high unemployment.

It seems clear that most immigrants to the United States come seeking a job. But people differ over what it means to have so many recent immigrants in the American work force. Much of the controversy has focused on the impact of undocumented aliens. Those who favor restricting immigration argue that undocumented workers affect American citizens in two ways. Because some employers prefer undocumented workers, they take jobs away from American workers. Also, because many illegals are willing to accept lower pay, they depress wages.

There is evidence that immigrants keep wages down in various occupations, from the garment industry to the computer industry, where undocumented workers are used to assemble circuit boards. The pay for California's unionized lemon harvesters, for example, has remained at $6 per hour since the early 1980s because of competition from nonunion crews, which include undocumented workers. In Los Angeles, members of Local 531 of the Hotel Workers Union were forced to accept a pay cut from $4.20 per hour to $3.60 per hour in 1985, reportedly because some hotels were hiring undocumented workers at lower wages.

In many occupations, undocumented workers offer employers an attractive alternative. As reported in a series that ran in *The Dallas Morning News* in 1982, various Texas employers in the construction and restaurant industries said they preferred illegal workers over Americans. Undocumented workers, according to the employers, work harder, accept less pay, and do not join unions.

Moreover, people who take this view contend that the presence of undocumented workers leads directly to job losses for many Americans. According to Professor Donald Huddle of Rice University, for every 100 illegal immigrants employed in the United States, 65 U.S. workers are displaced. If Huddle is right, several million Americans are out of work or working at lower-level jobs because of undocumented workers.

Particular concern arises over the fact that undocumented workers seem to be taking better jobs, and higher paying ones, than in the past. Historically, many illegal immigrants worked as stoop laborers in the fields. Those who came to the cities typically worked as dishwashers or busboys. In either case, they worked in low-paying jobs, and generally undesirable ones. But as former Senator Walter Huddleston (D-Ky.) noted in a 1981 congressional debate on immigration, Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) statistics show that "almost two-thirds of the illegals apprehended were working at wages over $3.35 [the minimum wage], and many of them held jobs paying over $7.25 an hour." If, as recent INS apprehension statistics indicate, a majority of undocumented laborers now work in cities, in construction, industry, and the service sector, they are in direct competition with Americans who are looking for jobs.

Clearly, many Americans benefit by the presence of undocumented workers in the labor force. The benefits of immigrant labor include cheaper domestic service (provided by Mexican maids), and lower prices for new houses (because of lower pay for construction crews). But those who would restrict immigration are particularly concerned about the Americans who are harmed by the presence of so many newcomers, both legal and illegal. Immigration is of particular concern to the young, uneducated, and unskilled American workers who are in direct competition with a growing population of energetic and often desperate newcomers who will frequently accept wages and working conditions that are unacceptable to most Americans.

Those who are concerned about allowing into the country so many immigrants, both legal and illegal, are also worried about the cost of the social services provided to them. Refugees, for example, need extensive social support. When they are admitted to the United States, it is generally on the ground that they have demonstrated urgent need. Refugees frequently require not only intensive educational assistance, but also medical services and monetary support for at least a few years. At a time of limited resources, hard questions need to be asked about the cost of compassion.

It is a more difficult matter to estimate the cost of social services provided to illegal immigrants. Technically, illegal immigrants are not eligible for federal benefit programs such as Aid to Dependent Children and unemployment insurance. But, since many state and local social service programs do not systematically screen the legal status of applicants, some illegal aliens receive such social services as welfare, unemployment benefits, and even student grants.

There is particular concern, and not just in the border towns, about the cost of educating the sons and daughters of undocumented aliens. According to a recent report, there are some 1,380 illegal Salvadoran children enrolled in the public schools of Washington, D.C. In the words of Superintendent of Schools Floretta D. McKenzie, they are "putting a tremendous strain on our budget."

So the people who advocate restricting the number of immigrants allowed into the United States stress the importance of being realistic about the cost of our compassion. When they assess the costs imposed by recent immigrants—including their impact on the job market, and the price of providing social services and public schooling—they conclude that these costs amount to an unacceptable burden.

Doing Well by Doing Good

Not everyone agrees, however, with this assessment of the effects of the current level of immigration. Others take a different view both of the short-term costs and long-term benefits of inviting immigrants at the current level, and conclude that we could well afford to accept an even larger number of immigrants.

"America in the 1980s is vastly different from America in the 1880s. It is not antihuman or antisocial to say that too many people can be a problem. It is simply realistic to acknowledge the fact."

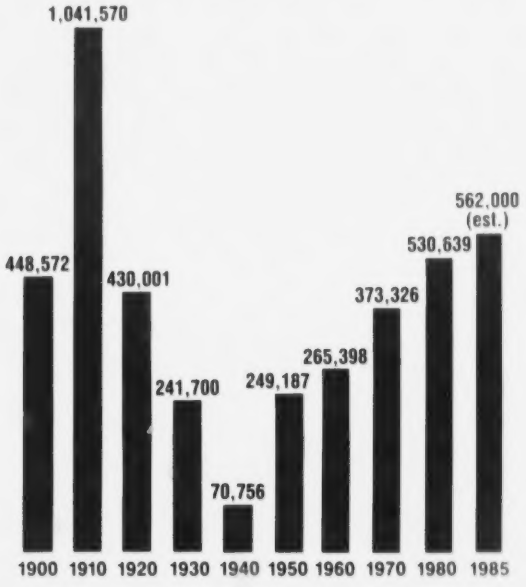
—Governor Richard Lamm

People who take this view differ over how much immigration is acceptable. But they agree that the current level is not excessively high. We think of ourselves as a nation of immigrants, and take pride in maintaining an "open door." Despite recent increases in the flow of immigrants, however, the percentage of the population that is foreign born today—about 7 percent—is less than half of what it was in 1910, when almost 15 percent of the population was foreign born. The United States has a smaller share of foreign-born persons today than do many nations that are regarded as having homogeneous populations such as Switzerland, France, and Sweden.

From this view, fears about "overcrowding" are hardly persuasive. The United States, which has the lowest population density of any developed nation, is in no danger of running out of land. And the successes of the environmental movement over the past decade have shown that polluted air and water are by no means an inevitable consequence of a growing population and an expanding economy.

Advocates of this position take particular exception to restrictionists' views of the effect of immigrants on the job market and the economy. It is not accurate, as they point out, to regard an economy as a zero-sum game in which one person's gain is another's loss. Immigrants don't just take jobs, they also *make* jobs and pay taxes, and in doing so contribute to economic growth. As Lawrence Fuchs, former staff director of the Select Commission on Immigration concludes, what was true in the past is still true today: Americans do well by doing good.

Immigration to the United States



Source: Immigration and Naturalization Service

The number of people admitted to the United States yearly has varied widely according to the policy that was in effect and the number of people who wanted to come. These figures do not include refugees or people who entered illegally.

This view of the economic impact of immigration is supported by several studies. In a recent study by the Urban Institute of unemployment rates in southern California during the 1970s, researcher Thomas Muller found that, contrary to popular perception, the growing immigrant population there did not reduce job opportunities for citizens. In fact, wrote Muller, "Despite mass immigration to southern California, unemployment rates rose less rapidly there than in the remainder of the nation. . . . The influx of immigrants was not accompanied by job losses for other workers." The study found no adverse effects for black teenagers and other unskilled groups that are especially prone to unemployment.

A recent study by the Rand Corporation of the effects of Mexican immigration to California comes to a generally similar conclusion. According to the study, "Overall, immigrants provide economic benefits to the state." It found that wage levels of all workers, including black workers, in California and Los Angeles were substantially higher than those of their counterparts in other states. The study concluded that although the presence of a large pool of immigrant workers might have slowed wage increases, it had not erased the earnings advantage enjoyed by the Anglo and black nonimmigrants.

If large numbers of immigrants were entering the region and taking jobs, why didn't others lose jobs as a consequence? Quite simply, those newcomers didn't just earn money. They also *spent* money, which created jobs for others. Moreover, immigrants frequently started businesses, which employed natives as well as other immigrants.

One way of understanding the effect of illegal immigrants is to imagine what would happen if they were all deported. As people who look at the jobs issue from this perspective conclude, there would probably be no increase in the number of jobs available to indigenous workers. Especially in industries facing competition from low-cost imports, the availability of immigrant labor can make the difference between survival and bankruptcy. The garment industry in Florida, for example, thrives largely because of Hispanic labor. In the words of Warren Henderson, an official with the Florida Department of Commerce, "Without an abundant pool of willing workers at a relatively low cost, many industries would be forced to shut down entirely or move offshore."

People who take this perspective do not regard immigration as an unmixed blessing. Nor do they suggest that *every* American benefits from it. Large populations of undocumented workers can depress wages or lead to fewer wage increases for those working in immigrant-dominated occupations. But, on the whole, these new immigrants are not taking jobs away from Americans. Moreover, they bring valuable skills and personal qualities — energy, fresh perspectives, a commitment to hard work — that reinvigorate the work ethic and the economy.

Costs and Benefits

People who look at the "immigrant effect" from this perspective reach a different conclusion, too, about whether immigrants consume more social services than they pay in taxes. What is too often overlooked, as they see it, is that even most illegal immigrants pay taxes. It is estimated that some 70 percent of illegal aliens have Social Security as well as federal and state income taxes withheld from their pay by employers who want to maintain the appearance of using legal labor.

In fact, as the people who take this approach point out, a typical illegal alien pays *more* in taxes than the cost of the social services he or she consumes. Researchers at the University of Texas at Austin found that the taxes collected from illegal aliens in that state exceeded the state's cost of education and other services used by those aliens. And the Rand study in California showed that tax contributions from Mexican immigrants more than paid for the social services they used, with the exception of education costs. As it is for other low-income families in the area, the cost of providing education to the children of Mexican immigrants is subsidized by the state, in the belief that public investment in education provides general public benefits.

People who share this view conclude that it is shortsighted to restrict immigration on the ground that it may impose certain modest costs. It is for the good of the society, as well as individual immigrants, that all people living here receive adequate medical care and a good education. Even if recent immigrants do depend upon public services for a few years while they are getting on their feet, most become productive workers within a fairly short period. Individuals who are willing to take the drastic step of starting a new life in a new country tend to be bolder, more entrepreneurial, more willing to work hard. That helps to explain why, as economist Barry Chiswick found, the average immigrant earns at least as much as the average native within just 11 years after coming to America. From that point on, they are paying their own way, contributing to the nation's prosperity as well as their own.

From this perspective, it is essential to weigh such intangibles as the ingenuity and perseverance of many immigrants, their willingess to adapt, innovate, and sacrifice. In the words of Anthony Lewis, columnist for the *New York Times*, "It is thrilling when you see the immigrant phenomenon, all over this country. In New York, Koreans work incredible hours to create those wonderful produce markets. In Boston, Ethiopians run most of the parking garages. In California, people from many parts of Latin America play a growing economic role. In the Southwest and elsewhere there are hardworking communities of Vietnamese and Cambodians." This commitment to hard work and achieving the American dream is likely to make the pie larger for everyone.

"If immigrants add vigor to our economy and culture, can we not accommodate half as large an alien presence as our grandparents did?"

— James Fallows

A Matter of Values

No simple act of arithmetic will answer the question of whether, on balance, these newcomers harm us by the burden they impose. Virtually everyone agrees that there are certain costs, and substantial ones, which arise from immigrants' use of public services, particularly hospitals and schools. The people who live in cities such as El Paso and Laredo that contain large immigrant communities probably do pay a disproportionate share of those costs. Whether immigrants — legal and illegal — are a net burden for the nation as a whole is a different matter.

Relative to the current population, total immigration of about one million per year is less than half the immigration rate allowed early in this century. "If immigrants add vigor to our economy and culture," asks writer James Fallows, "can we not accommodate half as large an alien presence as our grandparents did?"

This is a choice, and it lies at the very center of today's debate over immigration. Some people, however, are less concerned with how many immigrants there are than with the problem of assimilation — with who they are, and whether they can become part of American culture. So let us examine this aspect of the problem.

3

Significant Differences

"The inscription attached to the Statue of Liberty contains no suggestion that at some point immigration might change American society too much. The question is whether in a 'nation of nations' there can be too much diversity."

"E Pluribus Unum" — out of many, one. It is a motto that appears on every one-dollar bill, a phrase so familiar that we hardly notice it. Yet the message is worth pondering, for it describes a distinctively American achievement and a chronic problem. It originally referred to the act of political union in which the colonies joined to form a sovereign state. But it also accurately describes who we are as a people. Like the food we eat — an "all-American" combination of hamburgers, pizza, and tacos — America is the sum total of a vast number of national differences.

The American tradition is rooted in a commitment to individual rights and equal opportunity. Any exclusive definition of community, any restrictive covenant that arbitrarily labels some individuals as insiders and others as outsiders, goes against our grain. A nation of immigrants cannot easily live with a restrictive immigration policy. The Immigration Act amendments of 1965 had the intent of eliminating a national quota system which for 40 years preserved the ethnic and racial composition of the United States as it existed in 1920 by discriminating against Asians, Southern Europeans, and others.

To an extent that few people anticipated at the time, the national diversity of immigration increased dramatically as a result. In recent years, immigrants have come from about 200 nations. Hispanics, South and East Asians, Middle Easterners and non-Hispanic Caribbean migrants are the predominant groups. Immigrants also come from Albania and Turkey, from the island nations of the Pacific, and from such African nations as Gabon and Djibouti. They bring a dazzling variety of cultures, customs, and languages. While the diversity of those cultures enriches American culture it also creates certain problems. It is not unusual for school systems in cities from Seattle to Chicago to use teachers who are competent in one of a dozen or more foreign languages. The Los Angeles County court system provides interpreters for 80 different languages from Albanian and Amharic to Turkish and Tongan. One Los Angeles judge estimates that half of his cases require an interpreter.

But some people worry that by inviting people from so many cultures, we have neglected something quite important. Is pluralism at odds with our concern for unity and community, our interest in maintaining a core of common values, symbols, and social commitments? People who believe that current immigration patterns are altering the weave of American society are concerned about the effects of this new wave of immigrants. But they are less concerned about their economic impact than with their impact on American communities. The inscription attached to the Statue of Liberty contains no suggestion that at some point immigration might change American society too much or too fast. Yet as immigrants come from an ever-greater variety of cultures, people who take this point of view argue that the cultural fabric is now stretched too thin.

House Majority Leader Jim Wright worries about "a Balkanization of American society into little subcultures." Roger

Chick Harrity, *U.S.News and World Report*

New Americans take the oath of allegiance in a federal court in Washington, D.C.

Conner of the Federation for American Immigration Reform worries that "the new immigration will not work the same as the old," and that new immigrants are not as motivated to assimilate. The worry is that the advantages of diversity are beginning to be outweighed by the dangers of separatism and conflict.

People who take this point of view are particularly concerned about one feature of this new wave of immigrants. About half of all the people now coming to the United States — including illegal as well as legal immigrants — speak Spanish. That is a larger concentration of immigrants from one language group than America has ever experienced. For some people, this raises troubling questions: Will Hispanics, because of their very numbers, remain a culture apart? Will their presence threaten the elimination of English as the nation's *de facto* official language? Are they, in brief, different from previous immigrant groups?

Melting Pot or Boiling Pot?

People who are worried that we may have allowed in more immigrants than can be assimilated into American culture look first at the states that have absorbed so much of this new wave of immigration — such as California, which is home to 64 percent of the country's Asians, and 35 percent of its Hispanics. Los Angeles alone has some two million Mexicans, more than any other city except metropolitan Mexico City, and about half as many Salvadorans (300,000) as San Salvador.

Even cities that are not normally thought of as major host communities for the new immigration are being transformed by it, with a variety of results, both favorable and unfavorable. Jersey City is a preferred destination for people from India. According to city officials, the 15,000 or so Indians in that community are widely regarded as a stabilizing and family-oriented element, whose children work hard in the city's schools.

In Detroit, which has the largest concentration of Arabic-speaking people outside of the Middle East, there is a different story. While earlier Arab immigrants to Detroit helped to revitalize dying urban neighborhoods, recently arrived Middle Eastern immigrants — including more than 100,000 Lebanese, Palestinians, Yemenis, and Iraqis — have been involved in a series of conflicts with the host community. A common observation there is that the most recent wave of Arab immigrants seems not to be assimilating as readily as earlier Arab immi-

grants, possibly because many of them came to the United States as refugees, and hope eventually to return to the Middle East.

But no city provides so vivid an illustration of the problem of assimilation as Miami, in Dade County, Florida. Those who worry about what an influx of foreigners can do — particularly if a majority of these newcomers share a single language — feel that in Miami the melting pot may have met its match.

The pivotal event in the transformation of Miami was the Cuban revolution, when hundreds of thousands of Cubans fled to the United States. Today, it is estimated that more than 80 percent of the 500,000 Hispanics who live in Dade County are Cuban. Little Havana, on Miami's south side, is where Cuban refugees first took up residence in the 1960s, and restaurants along Southwest Eighth Street ("Calle Ocho") still serve plates of black beans and rice. Miami's Hispanic population also consists of a sizable Puerto Rican colony, and neighborhoods populated largely by Colombians, Nicaraguans, and Salvadorans.

Miami's ability to assimilate newcomers was tested most recently by an influx of French-speaking Haitians, many of whom came to this country illegally. They pose a particular problem because so many were illiterate when they arrived. Accustomed to a life-style far different from what Miami offers, the Haitians brought customs and religious practices that were unfamiliar and sometimes offensive to some of their neighbors.

"We fear that as peoples within the United States become too differentiated, too separated, we lose all possibility of communicating, and of identifying with each other as citizens in a polity."

— Gerda Bikales

There is little doubt that the influx of immigrants has revitalized the culture and economy of Miami. But as the city's character has changed, certain tensions have emerged. Miami is sometimes referred to as the "capital of Latin America," a phrase that some utter with pride and others with resentment. "It doesn't seem fair," said Dylan Taylor, a 20 year old who works at a restaurant in the Coconut Grove neighborhood. "They're here, and we have to accept it. This is our community, but I see Cubans now who are offended if I don't speak their language." In many neighborhoods, you hear more Spanish than English. The city boasts various Spanish-language media — including two daily newspapers, two television stations, six radio stations, and the weekly publication *Replica*. Resentment about the widespread use of Spanish led to the passage of a county referendum that made English the official language several years ago, and forbade the use of any other language for official business.

If the changes that have taken place in Miami since the 1960s are upsetting to some of the city's older residents, who feel like foreigners in their own country, those changes are particularly galling to blacks. Largely as a result of the fact that many blacks feel shut out of the local labor market where bilingualism is often a job requirement, antagonisms have developed between blacks and Hispanics. Maurice A. Ferre, the Puerto Rican-born former mayor of Miami, aptly calls the city not a melting pot but a "boiling pot."

Still, Ferre — like most of the city's leaders — takes a certain pride in the Latinization of Miami. "You can be born

here in a Cuban hospital," says Ferre, "be baptized by a Cuban priest, buy all your food from a Cuban grocer, take your insurance from a Cuban broker, and pay for it all with a check from a Cuban bank. You can get all the news in Spanish. You can go through life without having to speak English at all."

A Cautionary Lesson

Those who regard Miami's experience as a cautionary lesson respond to that development with alarm. Senator Lawton Chiles (D-Fla.) believes that if the flow of immigration is not controlled, "within ten years, we will not recognize the United States as we see it today."

What is it about this new wave of immigration that causes concern? As people who share this view see it, it is the fact that the U.S. has never before tried to absorb so many newcomers speaking the same foreign language. Today, more than 40 percent of legal immigrants are Hispanic. In previous waves of immigration, no single group predominated. It is true that about one quarter of all immigrants in the 1880s spoke German, and that about the same proportion of all immigrants from 1901-1910 spoke Italian. But even in those periods, immigrants as a whole represented a broad range of language groups. Moreover, the concentrations that did occur were relatively short-lived.

As recently as 1950, the census counted fewer than four million U.S. residents who would today be classified as Hispanic. By 1984, their number was estimated at more than 17 million, with roughly 60 percent tracing their ancestry to Mexico, and others to such countries as Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and El Salvador. Some experts project that by the year 2000 the Hispanic population will number at least 30 million, and comprise roughly 12 percent of all U.S. residents. If so, Hispanics would be the largest American minority.

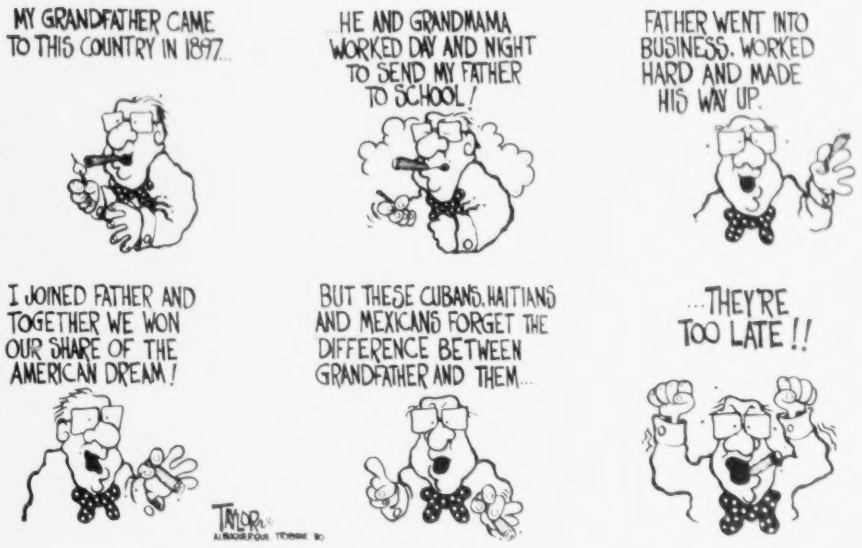
Accordingly, those who see cause for alarm in the changing ethnic character of America pay special attention to the impact of Hispanics. In the words of Otis L. Graham, a historian at Stanford University, "In the Southwest, where Spanish-speaking populations are large and growing, entire job sites and even industries have become Hispanic. For the first time in our history, a majority of migrants speak just one language — Spanish — and most of them live in enclaves served by radio and television stations, as well as other communications, in Spanish."

Among people who share this view, the concern is that Hispanics may remain a culture apart. First-generation immigrants have always tended to live together in ethnic communities. But some believe that this tendency is more marked among Hispanics. That is cause for concern, particularly considering the sheer number of Hispanic immigrants, and the fact that entire neighborhoods in Miami and other cities are now predominantly Hispanic. Moreover, the ease of transportation between the United States and Latin American countries may

Randy Taylor/Sygma

Miami: the heart of Little Havana

23


MY GRANDFATHER CAME TO THIS COUNTRY IN 1897...
...HE AND GRANDMAMA WORKED DAY AND NIGHT TO SEND MY FATHER TO SCHOOL!
FATHER WENT INTO BUSINESS. WORKED HARD AND MADE HIS WAY UP.
I JOINED FATHER AND TOGETHER WE WON OUR SHARE OF THE AMERICAN DREAM!
BUT THESE CUBANS, HAITIANS AND MEXICANS FORGET THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GRANDFATHER AND THEM...
...THEY'RE TOO LATE!!
TAYLOR

Taylor—*Albuquerque Tribune*, N. Mex./Rotheo

reduce the incentive for Hispanics to make a commitment to American society.

A Common Language, a Common Culture

While the people who express this concern pay particular attention to Hispanics, they are concerned about any ethnic group that seems not to be assimilating. In particular, they worry that some of these new immigrants continue to use their native language even years after their arrival in the United States. Having a large group detached from the mainstream of American culture could, as proponents of this view see it, affect the nation's social stability. It is no small matter to have millions of people cut off from the main sources of information, millions of people who are unable to communicate with their new compatriots. What is particularly worrisome is the insistence of some recent immigrants upon bilingualism.

It is not coincidental that, in response to the wave of immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe in the early 1900s, one of the methods chosen for restricting entry was a literacy test. In effect, the message was that learning the English language is a symbol of one's commitment to join American culture, and an indispensable tool for doing so. The fear often voiced today is that some of the new arrivals are less eager to trade in their culture for that of their adopted country — and that native-born Americans have become timid about insisting upon the importance of doing so.

That, finally, is what disturbs some people about recent developments in Miami, and about what seems to be happening elsewhere, too, as a consequence of this new wave of immigration. They argue that no society can afford to ignore the elements that lend a sense of unity, of community.

In the words of Gerda Bikales, executive director of U.S. English, an organization that promotes the use of English in the United States: "We fear that as peoples within the United States become too differentiated, too separated, we lose all possibility of communicating, and of identifying with each other as citizens in a polity. We still expect, and we should expect that migrants accommodate themselves to us so that we can communicate, so that we have some things in common, so that, when push comes to shove, we can relate to each other as citizens with a shared vision of the national interest."

People who take this point of view insist upon the importance of moderating the pace of immigration, and finding some way to ensure that no single ethnic or linguistic group dominates American immigration. "What is important," writes Governor Richard Lamm, "is the pace of change. We don't want to suffer the overturning of our way of life or the clash of differing cultures."

Miami Revisited

Others take a different view of what has happened in Miami, as well as the larger question of how this new wave of immigrants is blending into American culture. As they see it, far from worrying about the effects of diversity, we should recognize that diversity is the source of America's strength and distinction. Assimilation has always been a slow process. But there is little reason, in their view, to conclude that the new immigrants are any different from previous generations of immigrants.

People who take this view recall that incorporating new arrivals into American society has never been simple. Repeatedly, concern has been expressed that the national character is

threatened by new groups, that "hyphenated Americans," as Theodore Roosevelt put it during World War I, are turning the country into a "polyglot boarding house."

Indeed, few themes in American history are so consistent as worries about ethnic change. With each new wave of immigrants, fears are expressed that *this* group is different, and unlikely to assimilate. No group was regarded as more of a threat than the Germans who, especially in the 1850s and 1860s, accounted for so large a part of the immigrant population. Even a century before, when German immigration was just starting, prominent voices spoke out against them. In 1751, Benjamin Franklin asked, "Why should the Palatine boors be suffered to swarm into our settlements and by herding together, establish their language and manners to the exclusion of ours? Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a colony of aliens, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us, instead of our Anglifying them?"

From this perspective, recent concern about assimilation echoes a familiar and characteristically American refrain. To many observers, what seems to be happening in Miami is a contest between opposing forces: the Latinization of Miami or the Americanization of Latins. But those who take a more positive view see a gradual blending of both worlds, the beginning of assimilation.

While it is true that most of the 23 million Americans who speak a foreign language at home speak Spanish, the real issue — as proponents of this view see it — is whether the children learn English. Walking through Little Havana or any of the other predominantly Hispanic neighborhoods in Miami, you might be struck by how much Spanish is spoken. But most second-generation Cubans, like second-generation Italians and Germans before them, are proficient in English, and are less interested in liberating the motherland than in being Americans. And Mexicans, as the Rand study of California showed, "are following the classic American pattern of integrating into U.S. society, with education playing a critical role in this process."

"It is easy for Americans to fail to appreciate the strength of American culture," says Henry Cisneros, the first Mexican-American mayor of San Antonio. "Mexican-Americans like the American way of life," including, as he points out, not just the accoutrements like automobiles and the Dallas Cowboys, but also due process and a sense of participation. "All of the things that shape the American way of life," says Cisneros, "are indomitable."

From this perspective, fears of "unassimilable" ethnics are little more than an echo of the fears that have been repeatedly expressed about each new wave of immigrants, fears that were stilled, finally, when the immigrants' children committed themselves to American customs and ideals. From this point of view, this repeated fear has no basis in fact. Like all prejudice, it is rooted in ignorance.

As defenders of this position point out, one widespread

"There are a lot of benefits in carving community out of diversity. That's a challenge, and it takes work. But there are tremendous opportunities in pluralism."

— Dale Frederick Swartz

Time Magazine

Today, some 300 American periodicals serve immigrant communities. The fact that so many of these are written in the native language raises a question: are these publications a bridge to a new society, or an invitation to cultural separatism?

misapprehension is that Hispanics can accurately be regarded as members of a single culture. In fact, Hispanics are as diverse as Europeans were in the nineteenth century. Cubans, Mexicans, Salvadorans, and Dominicans — to name just a few — come from a broad range of cultures and backgrounds, and often share little except a common language.

Contentions that the cultural fabric of America is being stretched too thin are really a reflection of stereotypes. In the words of Reverend Silvano Tomasi, of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops: "There is a subtle implication by the restrictionists that the country will suffer from cultural diversification. That's a code word for Asians and Hispanics. That runs against the total experience of American history. The same arguments were made when the Germans arrived in the early 1800s, then the Irish, then the Jews. We cannot build walls around the United States."

Finally, people who take this view are troubled by the very suggestion that we should try to control the ethnic mixture of immigrants. The laudable intent of the revised immigration laws that were put into effect in 1965 was to replace a system that favored certain nations with a system that looks impartially upon the world and invites people from all nations on an equal basis. The American tradition is rooted in a commitment to equal opportunity, and our immigration policy should carry out that commitment. In the words of Dale Frederic Swartz, of the National Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Forum: "There are a lot of benefits in carving community out of diversity. That's a challenge, and it takes work. But there are tremendous opportunities in pluralism."

Too Much Diversity?

For a nation that has as its motto "E Pluribus Unum," deciding if there is such a thing as too much diversity poses a poignant predicament. Our task today, as Lyndon Johnson put it when he signed the 1965 amendments to the immigration law, is to align our practice with our ideals. That would be easier to do if we were committed to just one principle, the goal of pluralism. It is a more difficult task because another value is at stake, the value we attach to our coherence as a society. Understanding the relationship of these two values and finding the right balance between them, that is what we need to talk about, and try to agree on.

Deciding which people we are willing to invite depends not only on what these new immigrants are doing to us, but also on the urgency of their appeal for asylum. As the proponents of another position see it, in our preoccupation with what the new immigrants are doing to us, we have lost sight of the nation's promise as a haven to those seeking refuge. So let us turn to this second perspective on immigration.

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Seeking Refuge

"I don't know what Brooklyn will be like," says Khounphom Sone, a 36-year-old refugee from Laos, "but I have been told that it is a very big city, with houses 50 or 60 levels high. I want to go to Brooklyn very much, because my brother is there."

Khounphom Sone, his wife Pratsany and their five children are waiting in a processing center in Thailand with papers that say "Destination: LaGuardia." Like thousands of their countrymen, and additional thousands of Cambodians and Vietnamese, Mr. Sone's family suffered because of their association with Americans in the wars that brought Communist governments to power in those nations in the 1970s. Mr. Sone, a mechanic, is poor and has little education. Among his reasons for wanting to go to America are his fears of political persecution, as well as hopes for a better job, and education for his children. He wants to leave, as he says, because "Communism doesn't give us rice or work."

In many ways, Mr. Sone and his family are representative of many Southeast Asian refugees who are uprooted and looking for a new home. More than 300,000 Laotians have left their homes since the Communist takeover in 1975, and thousands of them remain in prison camps or in United Nations resettlement camps. Except for Pakistan and China, Asian countries generally refuse refugees from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. So the refugees' hopes focus on Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States.

As it happened, Mr. Sone found the solution to his problem in a Thai refugee camp, where he learned that two of his brothers had fled from Laos to the United States. Under current immigration law, close relatives of United States residents receive preference in immigration proceedings. Mr. Sone and his family were given permission to immigrate on that basis.

"In a world teeming with refugees, an unprecedented number of them reach American shores to claim asylum. The question is how the United States will cope with this rising number of people seeking refuge. To whom should we offer shelter?"

Pavlovsky/Sygma

Vietnamese refugees wait in international waters in 1979.

Doug Marlette, *The Charlotte Observer*

"GIVE ME YOUR RICH, YOUR FAMOUS, YOUR NOBEL LAUREATES, YOUR RUSSIAN POETS AND POLISH EMISSARIES, YOUR RESPECTABLE WHITE ANTI-SOVIETS YEARNING TO BREATHE FREE....."

Mr. Sone's case, and that of thousands of others who remain in political prison camps and in temporary resettlement facilities, illustrates what some people regard as the most conspicuous flaw in America's immigration policy. Though United States immigration laws make special provisions for refugees, the number of refugees admitted in each of the past few years has been declining. At a time when the world is awash with refugees, some people are concerned that the current level of refugee admissions amounts to a denial of our historic commitment to provide a haven for the persecuted and the oppressed.

Displaced People

There have always been refugees. But because of the convulsive political and economic circumstances of the past two decades, their number has been increasing. Today, the world is teeming with refugees — individuals displaced from their homes by civil war, persecution, and natural disasters. The UN estimates that more than 12 million uprooted persons are looking for a home.

Consequently, many countries have experienced a rapid increase in the flow of refugees. Wherever there is unrest, political upheaval or natural disaster, neighboring countries have had to cope with people coming across their borders seeking refuge. It is estimated that close to three million Afghan refugees are now living in Pakistan. More than one million refugees — many of them from Ethiopia — have settled in the Sudan.

For the United States, which has traditionally played a special role in providing a haven for displaced people, this increase in the number of people seeking refuge poses difficult questions about an appropriate balance between compassion and realism, between what we would like to do and what we are able to do.

Among all the aliens who apply for residence and American citizenship, the victims of political or religious persecution make the strongest claim for admission. If you don't take us in, they say, we shall be killed or brutally oppressed in our own country. Since the end of World War II, the United States has taken in more than a million displaced people, including Europeans who fled from the devastation of war, Hungarians who fled after the Soviet invasion, and Cubans who left when Fidel Castro came to power.

For some years, U.S. immigration policy has recognized that refugees deserve special consideration and assistance. The 1965 Immigration Act reserved 6 percent of all visas — 17,400 of them each year — for refugees. But as the events of the 1970s amply demonstrated, that number was grossly insufficient to accommodate all of those who came here because of political upheaval or fear of persecution in their homeland. In 1978, immigration from Vietnam alone was nearly 90,000 — including the "boat people" whose desperation was so widely publicized.

In 1980, Congress passed the Refugee Act in response to

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the growing problem of refugees worldwide. That Act provided financial assistance and other kinds of help to assist refugees in becoming self-sufficient. The new law raised the annual limit from 17,400 per year to 50,000, and allowed the President, in consultation with Congress, to admit more when it is "justified by grave humanitarian concerns or in the national interest." By allowing leeway in admitting refugees, Congress recognized the likelihood of emergencies that would create periodic surges of refugees. Using the discretion granted by the new law, President Carter approved refugee admissions far above the 50,000 ceiling. The number of refugees admitted in 1980 was a record high, over 200,000. Since then, however, refugee admissions have declined to 97,000 in 1982, and 71,000 in 1984. For 1986, refugee admissions are expected to be about 68,000.

And that, as some people see it, is the problem: many who deserve refuge are being turned away. Critics of the current refugee policy feel that it imposes arbitrary restrictions, and excludes many of the world's homeless and persecuted who deserve both our sympathy and the offer of refuge.

A More Generous Policy

Advocates of a more generous refugee policy are particularly critical of the requirement that refugees show that they are *personally* singled out for political persecution. According to the 1980 law, the only requirement for political asylum is a "well-founded fear of persecution" upon returning home. But, as the law is currently interpreted, individuals must be singled out for political persecution in their home countries. It is not enough to flee from a climate of persecution.

As critics of the policy see it, people are recognized as refugees mainly if they come from Communist regimes. At the same time, most of those who flee from noncommunist regimes — no matter how fearful they are of political persecution — are regarded as economic refugees, and sent back home. INS statistics show that in 1985, 38 percent of Polish applicants were granted asylum, as were 23 percent of the Afghans who asked for refuge from their Soviet-dominated country. Meanwhile, just 3 percent of the Salvadoran requests were approved.

Shortly after the 1980 law was passed, it was tested by the arrival of thousands of Haitians who appeared on Florida's shores in a scramble of small boats. The Haitians came from a country that was officially a friend of the United States, and a bulwark against the spread of Communism in the Caribbean. One of the problems of these would-be refugees is that they were fleeing a non-Communist regime. Despite the Haitians' claims that, if sent home they would face persecution, immigration authorities questioned whether the Haitians could prove that they had been singled out for persecution. As critics saw it, that decision amounted to denying safe haven to refugees who clearly deserved it, and justifying that action with arbitrary distinctions.

As things stand, the United States more readily opens its

Refugee Laws at a Glance

Since 1980, U.S. immigration laws have included a special category to admit refugees outside of the regular preference system. Those who claim admission because of extraordinary need have several options:

Refuge

To apply for admission to the United States as a refugee, you must be outside the United States, but unable or unwilling to return to your homeland "because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion."

The maximum number of refugees to be admitted each year is set at 50,000, but this number can be raised by the President in consultation with Congress. In 1986 the ceiling was 67,000.

Refugees are eligible for a variety of special assistance programs. In addition they are eligible for most publicly funded social service programs. One year after being admitted to this country, a refugee is eligible to apply for permanent residence status, the first step in the process of becoming a citizen.

Asylum

People who are already within U.S. borders are not eligible for refugee status, but they can claim asylum. If it is determined that deportation would mean that they would face persecution because of their nationality, race, or political or religious beliefs, they become "asylees," which confers the same rights as refugee status. However, people granted asylum are not counted toward the overall limit of refugees admitted each year.

Humanitarian parole

The Attorney General has the right to admit anyone to this country if there is a pressing humanitarian need. Since the 1980 Refugee Act allowed the number of refugees to be raised when necessary, this category is rarely used. On a few occasions it has been used to admit someone who does not qualify as a refugee, but has an urgent need to come to the United States. Some individuals have been admitted, for example, for specialized long-term medical care.

Extended voluntary departure

In special instances, the federal government invokes an informal policy of allowing people to stay in the country temporarily, even if they do not qualify for asylum, on the grounds that sending them back to a country in a state of civil war or generalized violence would endanger their lives.

"Critics of the current refugee policy feel that it imposes arbitrary restrictions, and excludes many of the world's homeless and persecuted who deserve both our sympathy and the offer of refuge."

doors to individuals from Communist regimes who claim political persecution. That explains why some 500,000 Salvadorans who currently reside in the United States are in jeopardy. Many of them have requested asylum, claiming that they will face political persecution if they return home—no matter which side they are on in that country's political dispute.

Those who want a more generous refugee policy point out that the conditions in El Salvador fully justify claims of political persecution. Sixty thousand civilians have been killed in El Salvador in just six years, and one quarter of the population has been displaced by civil war. Under those circumstances, the Salvadorans who have fled to the United States and requested asylum deserve at least a temporary safe haven until conditions in their country permit their safe return.

Dale Frederick Swartz, president of the National Refugee, Immigration, and Citizenship Forum, draws this analogy to explain why the current policy of refusing asylum to most Salvadorans is inhumane. As he points out, El Salvador is roughly the size of the state of Massachusetts. If 60,000 people had been killed in civil unrest in Massachusetts, neighboring states such as Vermont, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Connecticut would experience a great influx of "refugees" fleeing the devastation. How would the residents of the surrounding states respond? Surely, says Swartz, most of those fleeing from Massachusetts would not be sent back on the grounds that they were not singled out for persecution. People living in the surrounding states would no doubt sympathize with their misfortune and offer refuge. And that, says Swartz, is exactly what the United States should do for the Salvadorans: sympathize with their misfortune and offer them safe haven.

A Matter of Principle

The 1980 Refugee Act, says Reverend William Sloane Coffin, "is a good law, but it is being miserably interpreted by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. While correctly classifying as political refugees people escaping a variety of communist countries, the INS insists on labeling Salvadorans and Guatemalan refugees as 'economic,' and as such deportable. The reason is transparent: to admit 'political' refugees from countries whose governments our own enthusiastically supports with military and economic aid would obviously raise embarrassing questions."

Reverend Coffin is one of the ministers active in the sanctuary movement, which has been appealing to the government to broaden its definition of a refugee, and apply this status more generously. The movement consists of more than 200 religious congregations that provide sanctuary to illegal immigrants from El Salvador and Guatemala. This is against the law, which specifies that concealing or harboring an alien who has not been legally admitted is a federal offense. The courts have ruled that religious sanctuary is not exempt from this law, and have sentenced some of the sanctuary activists to jail.

Leaders of the sanctuary movement justify their actions not only on the grounds of compassion, but also on the principle that refuge is a basic human right, and one that the United States has traditionally honored. "In our view," says Reverend Peter J. Scammon, a spokesman for the sanctuary movement, "sending these people back to El Salvador or to Guatemala is the same thing as putting Jews in a boxcar bound for Dachau. What we are doing is based not only on religious conviction but also on the deepest values of the United States as a place of refuge, a place to which persecuted people can come."

To those who insist upon a more generous refugee policy, the basic issue is whether a policy which excludes so many people who are needy and oppressed is humane. According to the United Nations, some 2,000 people a day attempt to flee from political persecution in Southeast Asia, Africa, Afghanistan, the Soviet Union, Central America, and other troubled parts of the world.

Many of those refugees are in a situation similar to the one described by author Elie Wiesel, who in 1944 was expelled from Hungary. "I remember that moment in precise detail," writes Wiesel. "Two Hungarian officers simply took my citizenship paper and threw the cherished certificate into the wastebasket. From that moment, I was an alien. Those who were supposed to protect me turned into enemies. A gendarme's gesture was enough to uproot me. I no longer belonged to that place nor to that nation."

"Do the American-born know what it means to be stateless?" asks Wiesel. "It means to feel unwanted everywhere, to arouse suspicion at every border. Unprotected by any government, the stateless person has no rights and no privileges.

A stateless person is not a person — not in the eyes of bureaucrats. That is why I also remember the day, in January 1963, when I stopped being stateless and became a citizen of the United States. I felt proud and vindicated, but I could not forget all those men and women, all those children, who were less lucky than I — all those refugees who had not been admitted to our shores."

To the advocates of a more generous refugee policy, it comes down to a matter of compassion, of remembering our heritage as a nation founded by refugees, and recalling all of those — Afghans, Salvadorans, and Southeast Asians — who are stateless, without rights or privileges.

An Overburdened System

Others defend the existing refugee policy. While they believe that we should do as much as we can for the persecuted and oppressed, they stress that the United States cannot be the place of last refuge for all of the world's refugees. "The number of refugees we admit," says Governor Richard Lamm, "will always be only a small fraction of those who could qualify for or benefit by admission. We have to recognize that we cannot solve the world refugee problem, or any substantial part of it, through immigration to the United States. We may actually increase refugee flows if we try to do so."

Since we must be selective, hard choices are necessary in deciding who will be admitted as a refugee. Under these circumstances, as people who view the situation from this perspective see it, it makes sense to acknowledge both diplomatic and ideological factors. Specifically, it makes sense to give preference to individuals from communist nations who claim refugee status. The United States has a special affinity for those whose support of democracy results in their exile by our political enemies. That was why we welcomed thousands of men and women who fled from Hungary after the failed revolution of 1956, as well as those who fled by helicopter and boat from Saigon in 1975. The repression of ideological allies generates an obligation to help.

At the same time, we have to be hardheaded about those who come claiming political persecution, without evidence to support their claims. Justifying its actions in deporting Salvadorans, the INS cites a State Department study of what happened to 500 people who were sent back. The study found no clear-cut evidence that those who returned were persecuted, or faced any direct danger.

Defenders of the current policy insist that the reason so many Salvadorans left their homeland was not because of a threat of personal violence, but rather to find better employment opportunities, or to live with family and friends in the United States. "Generalized conditions of poverty and civil unrest do not entitle people who leave their homelands to settle here," said Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams in 1985. "If

David Seavey, *USA TODAY*

the criterion for granting asylum were generalized violence, rather than fear of individual persecution," said Abrams, "half the 100 million people living between the Rio Grande and Panama would meet it, as would hundreds of millions of people in other parts of the earth."

Among other factors, defenders of the current refugee policy point to its high cost as a reason to place strict limits on the number of refugees admitted. Under the 1980 Act, refugees are eligible to receive cash assistance and medical benefits for a period of 36 months, and most newly arrived refugees accept such assistance. The level of welfare dependency among refugees has been a thorny issue each time the 1980 law has been reauthorized. Officials have expressed alarm over the high rate of welfare dependency among some groups of refugees, and about the high cost of the special programs designed to get refugees on their feet.

People who take this position believe that the United States cannot offer refuge or grant asylum to many more people than we currently do. If asylum or refugee status were granted more readily, thousands of others who are already in the United States — and a far greater number of people abroad who are seeking asylum — would step forward to claim it, flooding an already overburdened system.

"If the criterion for granting asylum were generalized violence, rather than fear of individual persecution, half the 100 million people living between the Rio Grande and Panama would meet it."

—Elliott Abrams

Hard Choices about Huddled Masses

In this task of reexamining promises and deciding where to draw the line on immigration, some of the hardest choices are posed by refugees who ask for sympathy and refuge. The invitation America issued to the world's "huddled masses" is generous and noble, as is this nation's tradition of actually taking in so many displaced people. But since the number of people asking for admission on that basis exceeds our ability to accept refugees, distinctions have to be made and many requests must be refused.

This debate has pitted those who believe that we can and should be more generous in our refugee policy against those who believe that current policy already stretches the limits of what the United States can do for the world's persecuted and oppressed. But both sides have to confront hard questions. Those who defend the current policy need to ask how a country that prides itself as a nation of refugees can turn away people who are impoverished and oppressed, but cannot meet the law's requirement of proving "well-founded fear." Those who would define the refugee status more broadly need to consider what the consequences of their generosity will be, and whether they are prepared to accept those consequences.

Because it is so difficult for many of the impoverished and oppressed Latins and West Indians to come here legally, many of them take the risk of coming here illegally. This is another aspect of the immigration question, and to some people it is the most disturbing. It is to that perspective that we now turn.

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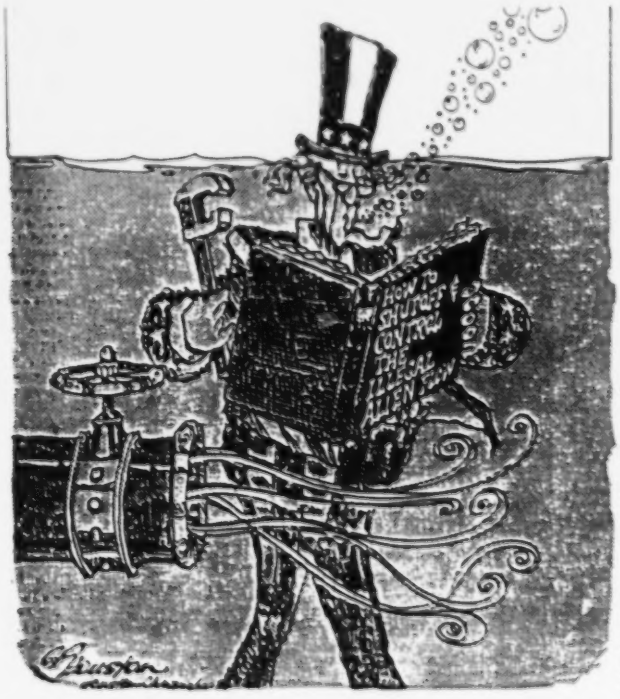
Border Crossing

It is dusk at the "tortilla curtain" which separates El Paso from Juarez, and several hundred men and women stand silently on the Mexican side, watching — and being watched by — a handful of green-uniformed U.S. Border Patrolmen. After a 45-minute standoff, the officers move on, and the Mexicans begin to split up into small clusters to cross the river to the place they call "El Norte."

Nowhere in the world does a border separate so much poverty from so much affluence. The border itself is a torn net, and with a little ingenuity and perseverance you can cross. Many of those waiting to cross the border are desperate, and not all of them are Mexicans. A considerable number have passed through from El Salvador, or other Central American or Caribbean nations. What draws them is the same lure that brought millions of immigrants — legal and illegal — before them. As Genesis, the rock group, says in the song "Illegal Alien," "Over the border, there lies the promised land, Where everything's easy, you just hold out your hand."

The burden of enforcement rests with the Border Patrol. It is a crime to enter without inspection. But for most of the aliens who enter here, the enforcement tools at the government's disposal are hardly fearsome. If you are an illegal immigrant from Korea or India, being sent home is a serious sanction. If you are a Mexican apprehended near the border, it is not. For many of them, deportation means a bus ride back across the border, and another attempt on another day. Border Patrol agents estimate that several people enter for every apprehension they make. What it comes down to is that most of the aliens are more determined to get in than we are to keep them out.

"Keeping uninvited aliens from crossing its borders is a particularly troubling task for a nation of immigrants. The debate is about how much of that illegal flow is tolerable, and about which measures to control it are acceptable."



Clyde Peterson, *Houston Chronicle*

"The question is whether illegal immigration is now such a serious problem that it requires efforts that in the past were rejected as distasteful or unnecessarily expensive."

Ports of Entry

Though the problem is most visible at the country's southern border, not all illegal aliens — perhaps not even the majority — come in by that route. For those who can afford the air fare to Canada, and for many of those who hire professional smugglers to get them in, it is easier to cross undetected at the northern border, near towns like Derby Line, Vermont.

For the INS, the borders — north and south — are just the beginning of the problem. Some aliens enter as students or tourists, and overstay their visas. Others take advantage of the "package deals" that are popular in countries where the list of people who have applied for visas is so long that some have to wait ten years or more to enter legally. Local agents sell forged visas and other documents to assist their clients to enter as nonimmigrant visitors. Then they arrange fraudulent marriages with U.S. citizens, which allow them to qualify for legal residence.

As former *New York Times* reporter John Crewdson wrote, "The reality — and it is a remarkable state of affairs — is that the United States is no longer able to keep out those from other countries who wish to come here, and there are many who wish to come. Anyone who possesses the physical strength, it seems, can walk across the Mexican border into Texas, Arizona, or California. Anyone with access to even the most bedraggled little boat can sail it into the Gulf Stream and land on some deserted Florida beach. Those who have the price of an airline ticket can enter the country as tourists or students and then lose themselves in the crowded ethnic communities of some big city."

No one has accurate figures of the total number of illegal aliens currently residing in the United States. Estimates range from two to twelve million. But whatever the actual number, the size of the illegal alien population is substantial. And this, to some people, is the most troubling aspect of the immigration problem. As people who take this position see it, the existing situation is manifestly unfair to those who have petitioned the U.S. government for legal entry and been told that they must wait years before they can qualify. It does a disservice to economically vulnerable Americans — the young, blacks, and others in blue-collar jobs particularly — who feel exploited by the presence of workers willing to labor for minimal wages. Moreover, by tolerating illegal immigration, we allow the existence of a subclass of noncitizens who, because they are afraid to cooperate with the law, live without some of its protection.

In its deliberations several years ago, the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy considered the impact of illegal aliens on American society, and concluded that it is a serious problem. Lawrence Fuchs, the Commission's director, said, "We can't go on making a travesty of our immigration policy by not enforcing the regulations." On that point there is little disagreement.

However, as illustrated by congressional debate on immigration over the past three years, there is little agreement about how best to solve the problem of illegal immigration. Each of the initiatives that has been suggested as a way of stopping illegal immigration is opposed by some groups because of its costs and side effects. This is why the debate over stepped-up enforcement is so troublesome: the measures that are most likely to deter illegal entry impose substantial costs; they infringe upon some people's civil liberties; and they go against the grain of a nation of immigrants that takes pride in calling itself an open society.

Enforcing the Laws

As some people see it, if the INS effectively deterred illegal entry, the most important part of the immigration problem would be solved. Among the measures they advocate is a stepped-up inspection effort at the border. At border stations, inspection of entrants now takes an average of about 30 seconds. Increasing the length of inspection, if only by a minute or so, would allow border agents to detect a higher percentage of illegal entrants and fraudulent documents. Proponents of stricter inspection feel that it is not unreasonable to expect travelers to undergo a minute-long interview before crossing an international border.

A longer border interrogation might make entering the United States somewhat more difficult, more unpleasant. If no additional agents were hired, it would mean longer lines at international airports. More thorough interviews with those applying for visas in U.S. embassies would no doubt cause complaints from foreign businessmen and tourists. At the cost of

Mexico: The "Push Factor"

When immigration experts refer to "push factors," they mean the local conditions in countries abroad which push people out to seek a better life elsewhere. Mexico offers a sobering example of how deteriorating conditions in other countries hasten the exodus to the United States. The Mexicans who are streaming across our southern border are fleeing an economy that looks increasingly feeble.

During the 1960s and 1970s, when their economy was growing at an average rate of about 6 percent a year, many Mexicans held out hope for the future. In the late 1970s, the government promised that riches from its newfound oil resources would be used to build an industrial base, and provide jobs for a rapidly increasing population. While the population continued its rapid growth, the Mexican economy did not. The oil bubble burst in 1982, and soon after, Mexico's oil-based economy turned soft.

Falling oil prices were only the beginning of Mexico's troubles. Farm production in Mexico is so meager that the nation has to import some $3 billion worth of U.S. farm products. No longer able to eke out a living on the land, many of the nation's farmers have fled to the cities, putting additional pressure on an already strained job market.

The austerity measures recently imposed by President Miguel de la Madrid make things worse in a nation where there is a huge backlog of demand for basic goods. Food, housing, and clothing are in short supply, as are jobs. It is estimated that more than 50 percent of the Mexican work force is unemployed. Mexico is undergoing, in its president's words, "the worst economic crisis in our contemporary history."

Where does one go to escape from a crippled economy, where one person in three suffers from malnutrition, where more than half the homes have neither electricity nor water? Mexico City may be the way station; the United States is the destination. In some Mexican towns, a majority of the men have left to seek work in the United States, and they send back whatever they can save. For most of them, the decision to go north is a simple matter of arithmetic. The minimum wage in Mexico City is about $4 a day, if you're lucky enough to find work. That is less than you can earn in an hour in Los Angeles. Some of the men who work in the United States send $2,000 a year back to their wives and children in Mexican villages. In this way, barely restricted access to the American employment market offers an important "safety valve" to unemployed and underemployed Mexicans.

Severe restrictions on border crossings, such as the ones announced by the Reagan administration in May 1986, would cause real hardship for millions of Mexicans. By some estimates, one Mexican in five depends on money earned by a relative in the United States. In many Mexican towns, half the total income is said to come from undocumented workers in the United States. As a recent Central Intelligence Agency report warns, depriving young Mexicans of the opportunity to work in the United States at a time when there are few jobs available at home could lead to social unrest and violence.

Randy Taylor/Sygma

In Mexico, desperate poverty and overpopulation force thousands to live in improvised shacks.

Crossing the border to find work in El Norte is dangerous, and there is no guarantee of finding work. Still, to millions of Mexicans, it is the most promising alternative. Most experts agree that, since the oil glut is likely to last at least another few years, Mexico has virtually no chance of repairing its shattered economy before 1990.

To some observers, Mexico provides a vivid illustration of the difficulty of stopping illegal immigration by imposing sanctions or tightening control of the border. In their view, the only realistic way to control illegal immigration is to acknowledge the power of "push factors" such as poverty and a lack of economic opportunity in "sender" countries, and to respond with appropriate foreign aid and development assistance.

Signe Wilkinson, *San Jose Mercury News*

such inconvenience, border interrogation could be improved.

In addition, people who take this point of view believe that the Border Patrol should be reinforced with additional personnel and more sophisticated equipment. In several respects, this is already happening. INS agents now use technologies borrowed from the military, such as $70,000 infrared sensors that even in total darkness detect the body heat emitted by illegal immigrants advancing across the border. The size of the Border Patrol has been increased over the past two years by about 30 percent, bringing total manpower to about 1,800. Considering the difficulty of patrolling only our southern border, such modest efforts at stepping up enforcement may have some effect, but they are unlikely to stanch the tide of illegals.

As sensible and straightforward as stepped-up enforcement might seem, each of the proposed measures to control the border has been criticized. Even the replacement of a collapsed fence a few years ago at the El Paso border was greeted with derision by commentators on both sides of the border, and parallels were drawn to the Berlin Wall.

The image of a fortified border is what strikes so many people as distasteful. In 1978, during congressional testimony, Representative James Scheuer (D-N.Y.) posed this question to INS Commissioner Leonel Castillo: "Can we regulate illegal entry into this country by means that are appropriate and acceptable to us?" he asked. "Can we do it with means that are not obnoxious?" And then, speculating about whether the Mexican border could be fortified or militarized, Scheuer answered his own question: "I don't think the American public would like to see a 20-foot-high Berlin Wall erected on our southern border with submachines and police guards and sirens and watchtowers." The chief reason for the lack of more stringent measures to stop the flow of illegals across the border is not insufficient resources but a national tradition that rejects such measures.

Interior Investigation

If the flow of illegals cannot be stopped at the border, another alternative is available. Some people have concluded that unless more is done to apprehend illegal aliens who have entered the country, the problem of illegal immigration is likely to remain unmanageable.

At airports or seaports, and along the border, people requesting admission are required to show proof of legal residency. Once inside the border, however, the burden of proof shifts. U.S. immigration officers may, within certain limits, stop and question individuals believed to be here illegally. At that point, responsibility for proving illegality rests with the INS officer. Consequently, once illegal immigrants cross the border, they can be reasonably confident of escaping apprehension.

The INS is allowed by law to conduct street sweeps in neighborhoods where illegal aliens are known to live. But the agency only rarely uses such methods. Many people now believe that the INS should step up its efforts to apprehend illegals where they live as well as at their workplaces.

Currently, illegals are sometimes apprehended at their workplace. Those actions, defended by some as a necessary component of the INS enforcement effort, are bitterly opposed by others. In 1982, INS agents conducted a series of raids called "Project Jobs." In all, some 5,410 illegal aliens were rounded up in cities from New York to California, and 4,000 of them were forced to leave the country as a result. Justified by the INS as a way of creating jobs for Americans, the raids were opposed by several groups, among them the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund. As critics saw it, "Project Jobs" was a shameful example of what can happen when law enforcement is given a higher priority than civil liberties or due process. In its zeal to identify and deport illegal aliens, the INS

mistakenly detained legal immigrants and American citizens without charge, simply because they looked as if they might be here illegally.

Similar objections were raised in May 1986, when the INS proposed that state and local police assist INS officers in enforcing immigration laws. Given the modest resources and manpower of the agency's internal inspection unit, some people argue that a nationwide network of law enforcement agencies is necessary to identify and remove illegal aliens. But civil rights groups are concerned that some local police might use immigration laws as a pretext for harrassment. Given the complexities of the immigration laws, even good faith enforcement might adversely affect "foreign-looking" citizens.

That gets to the heart of the dilemma regarding stepped-up enforcement. We have chosen as a nation not to have a police state, and have put into effect various measures to keep civil authorities from intruding unnecessarily into our private lives. If INS officers or police officials could stop and question people on the grounds that they might be illegal aliens, this would lead to infringements on citizens' rights, and to discrimination on the basis of race or national origin, violating some of the principles on which this nation was founded. Yet our insistence on restraining civil authorities—including the INS and local police—complicates the task of identifying and apprehending illegal aliens.

Removing the Economic Magnet

Others propose a different measure to halt the flow of illegals. They would impose "employer sanctions" to make it a crime to hire illegals. And this proposal has become the most hotly contested feature of the immigration reform bill.

The case for employer sanctions begins with the assertion that jobs are the main magnet for illegal immigrants, and that if this magnet were removed, the problem itself could be controlled. Proponents of employer sanctions are trying to fix what they regard as a significant loophole in the immigration laws. It is a crime to cross the border without inspection, and it is illegal for undocumented workers to take jobs in this country. Moreover, the immigration code imposes a $2,000 fine or a jail term of up to five years on anyone who "conceals, harbors, or shields from detection" an illegal alien. But because of a clause known as the "Texas proviso," which was passed at the insistence of growers in 1952, hiring illegal immigrants is not considered to be harboring. There is nothing illegal, in other words, about employing undocumented workers.

Since it is in the interest of many employers to use cheap labor, this loophole is an inducement, as many see it, to maintain the flow of illegal immigrants. As long as jobs are available here, no border — however well fortified — is going to stop people from trying to get them. And that, as some conclude, is what needs to be changed. "It is wrong," says Father Theo-

Amnesty: Deciding What to Do with the Aliens Already Here

To look at what the INS might do to step up its enforcement efforts at the border is to examine only part of the illegal immigration problem. There remains the thorny issue of what should be done with the illegal alien population that is already here. Millions of illegal aliens reside here, pay taxes, and have become part of their local communities. Yet they have few of the privileges to which legal residents are entitled. In the words of Leon Panetta, a California congressman: "The present situation is intolerable. We are creating a subculture in our society, one that has no rights, no protections."

Recognizing the importance of regulating the status of this "shadow population," the immigration reform bill proposes amnesty for illegal aliens who are already here. Legalization would bring within the protection of the law undocumented aliens who satisfy various eligibility requirements, allowing them eventually to become permanent residents or citizens. The bill passed in the spring of 1986 by the Senate, for example, would give temporary resident status to those who arrived before January 1, 1980. Those individuals could seek permanent resident status after three years, and citizenship after five years.

Advocates of legalization regard it not only as a necessary complement to the proposed crackdown on illegal immigration, but as a humane measure that would correct a morally intolerable situation. In the words of Doris Meissner, former acting director of the INS, "Society is harmed every time an undocumented alien is afraid to testify as a witness in a legal proceeding, to report an illness that may constitute a public health hazard, or to disclose a violation of U.S. labor laws."

Since amnesty was first proposed as part of the original immigration reform bill, it has been criticized on several grounds. Representative James Sensenbrenner (R-Wis.) argues that it would encourage further illegal immigration. In addition, he said, "it is unfair to the hundreds of thousands of immigrant applicants, some of whom have been waiting as long as ten years to come to this country legally." Others worry that amnesty would amount to an open invitation to fraud and abuse by ineligible aliens who may deluge the INS with false documents.

Amnesty has also been opposed on the ground that once immigrants are free to step out of the shadows, they will demand more public assistance. But the cost of this provision will depend as much on how generously Congress reimburses states and localities as on the number of immigrants who become legal residents.

The Granger Collection, New York

"Be just — even to John Chinaman," reads the caption of this 1893 cartoon. "You allowed that boy to come into your school, it would be inhuman to throw him out now — it will be sufficient in the future to keep his brothers out!" Conditions were so bad for Chinese immigrants in the nineteenth century that "not a Chinaman's chance" became a common description of a hopeless situation. Today, many people worry that we are creating an inhumane system by allowing illegal aliens to live in this country, but depriving them of the rights and privileges which citizens enjoy.

dore Hesburgh, chairman of the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy, "to exempt employers from hiring illegal aliens when it is unlawful for others to harbor them, especially when the main reason that illegals come to the United States is to work."

At the urging of the Select Commission, the immigration reform bill includes provisions that would make it illegal to knowingly hire illegal aliens, and impose fines for those who do so. The law would require employers to look at standard forms of identification for all new employees — such as a Social Security card, a driver's license, or a permanent resident alien identification card — and thus, as proponents see it, should not lead to discrimination against specific groups. Advocates of employer sanctions regard it as the most effective tool the INS could be given to become more effective.

But here too, as with proposals to step up enforcement, objections have been raised. Some regard employer sanctions as unenforceable, and a further inducement to the manufacture of false documents, such as false driver's licenses, birth certificates, and "green cards," which attest that the bearer is an alien legally permitted to work in the U.S. Because these false documents are already widely available, it is unreasonable, critics assert, to expect this new proposal to work.

Moreover, critics of employer sanctions say, the chances of being apprehended for hiring illegals would be so slim that the law would be ineffective in deterring employers from doing so — and for this reason the "economic magnet" would continue to draw people across the border.

Many people are particularly worried about the discriminatory effects of employer sanctions. Their concern is that if employers are faced with the threat of heavy fines, they may overreact to ensure compliance with the laws, thus discriminating in their hiring practices. The people who have the most to lose from the passage of such a law, these groups assert, are workers who — on the basis of skin color or accent — are likely to be regarded as "suspect."

An End to "Impulsive Generosity"

It is widely agreed that no other "pull factor" is so strong an inducement to illegal immigration as the availability of jobs. But there are other ways in which we may be encouraging the flow of illegal immigrants, or at least encouraging illegal aliens who are already here to stay. Perhaps, as some people argue, in order to deter illegal immigration we have to reconsider what Governor Richard Lamm refers to as this nation's "impulsive

generosity," and withdraw certain entitlements and services—such as public schooling and medical services — which some illegal residents currently receive.

One topic that has been repeatedly discussed in recent years is whether, by offering free public education to the sons and daughters of illegal aliens, we encourage them not only to come but to stay. Few illegal aliens come to this country mainly to enroll their children in American public schools. But some parents decide to bring their children because schooling is available. And people are more likely to settle permanently if the entire family resides here. In this sense, providing public education may encourage additional illegal immigration.

The question of whether the children of illegal aliens have a right to public education was raised in a case on which the Supreme Court ruled in 1982. The state of Texas, which filed the suit, argued that illegal aliens — whose very presence in the United States is against the law — should not be entitled to free public services. Lawyers for the aliens argued that denying such services amounted to discrimination, a denial of the Equal Protection Clause. In a split decision, the Court decided that — at least in the case of education for minor children — illegal aliens are entitled to free public services. Children, in the Court's judgment, should not be penalized for their parents' illegal act in bringing them to this country. It would be wrong, the majority concluded, to deprive them of such a basic human need as education.

The implications of that decision regarding other social services remain unclear. Speaking for the majority in that case, Justice Powell said that "if the children of illegal aliens were denied welfare assistance, which is made available to all other children who qualify, this also — in my opinion — would be an impermissible penalizing of children because of their parents' status."

That humanitarian attitude, as some see it, is one of the factors that has contributed to today's problem with illegal immigrants. In the words of immigration expert David North: "People are less likely to come here if they perceive that they will have difficulty in supporting themselves, and we have no obligation to make it easy for illegal immigrants to come here. But we do just that if we provide cash and benefits that cause people to stay who otherwise would go home because they couldn't make it in the United States."

It is a complicated question. On one level, it is a debate about the cost of providing certain services to individuals who are not legal residents. On another, it is concerned with the meaning of equal protection of the laws. On yet another level, it raises the moral question of what people should be entitled to, regardless of their legal status.

As Senator Paula Hawkins (R-Fla.) sees it, a person who has broken U.S. immigration laws should not be eligible to receive government benefits. On several occasions, Senator Hawkins has sympathized with taxpayers who are, as she puts it, "cheated" by illegal aliens who are obtaining welfare, food stamps, Medicaid, and other benefits. "We have an obligation first," she says, "to the people of the United States."

Others reply that there are compelling reasons to provide not only free public education but also medical services to everyone who resides in this country. Just as everyone living in the United States deserves equal protection under the law, everyone deserves public education and certain medical services as well. After all, public school is provided not only for the benefit of individuals, but also because it is in the public interest to have a well-educated citizenry. The same argument applies to the provision of certain medical services. So, as critics see it, this proposal to deny certain services to those who reside here illegally is not only inhumane, it is also shortsighted and not in the public interest.

Here, too, there is a balance to be achieved, between our humanitarian impulses and our concern for what Senator Alan Simpson calls "the first and most important duty of a sovereign nation" — to maintain control over its borders.

Hard Choices for a Nation of Immigrants

So there are various things that might be done to stem the tide of illegal immigration — including stepped-up border enforcement, employer sanctions, and the denial of certain benefits to illegal aliens. The question is whether illegal immigration is now such a serious problem that it requires more stringent measures that in the past were rejected as distasteful or unnecessarily expensive.

Some people conclude that the problem of illegal immigration has been exaggerated. In this respect, your answer to the question raised in the previous section — whether immigration at current levels is a substantial drain on the nation's resources — probably affects the way you think about illegal immigration, and the measures you are willing to support to curtail it.

Perhaps a certain amount of illegal immigration is part of the price we pay for emphasizing civil liberties and choosing to avoid a police state. Finally, the debate over illegal aliens raises questions not just about the importance we attach to stopping illegal immigrants, but also about which enforcement measures, if any, are consistent with our tradition as an open society.

Keeping unwanted aliens from its shores is a particularly difficult task for a nation of immigrants that has often managed to live up to its promise of offering shelter to huddled masses fleeing poverty or persecution. Decisions about where to draw the line are hard to make in any case. They are harder still if you're looking at people who are about to cross the border, people who are both anxious and expectant, just as millions of fresh arrivals were a century ago when they first set foot on Ellis Island.

Who's Invited?

> **"As a nation, we are faced with far more applicants than we can admit. It is a difficult task to define a realistic admissions policy that does not compromise our ideals."**

"Affluent and free countries, like elite universities, are besieged by applicants," writes Michael Walzer. "They have to decide on their size and character. As citizens of such a country, we have to decide whom should we admit. Ought we to have open admissions? Can we choose among applicants? What are the appropriate criteria for distributing membership?"

There is little question that the United States is, in Walzer's words, "besieged by applicants." In many Third World capitals, a long line of people seeking visas forms every weekday in front of the U.S. embassy. In India, 140,000 people are on the waiting list for an annual quota of 20,000 immigrant visas. In Mexico, applicants for immigrant visas are told they must wait eight years. In Hong Kong, 31,000 people have applied for the 600 places available each year. There is a substantial backlog of individuals claiming persecution in their homeland who have requested asylum. The 10,000 or so people who cross the border illegally each night south of San Diego — like the others who enter without inspection — are proof that many have decided to forego the application process entirely. Taking advantage of a porous border, they take their place in a growing "shadow population" of illegal aliens.

Many people agree that the nation has an immigration problem, and members of Congress are under substantial pressure to act. In the words of Senator Alan Simpson, "There have never been more constituent groups out there wanting us to do something." While many members of Congress agree upon the need for certain changes in immigration policy, they see nothing but grief in taking action. Though many Americans say they want immigration reform, public support for specific reform measures tends to be shallow, and there is widespread uncertainty about what, exactly, should be done. That helps to explain why, despite the fact that Congress has considered a comprehensive immigration reform bill in each of its past three sessions, the House and the Senate have so far failed to agree upon an acceptable measure.

For the third time in five years, in June 1986, the House Judiciary Committee approved a bill designed chiefly to curtail the flow of illegal aliens. When it goes to the floor of the House in the fall, it is expected to provoke a long and bitter debate, and its passage is by no means assured.

Admissions Policy

As it celebrates the one hundredth birthday of the statue in New York Harbor that stands as a symbol of "world-wide welcome," the United States — which has defined itself from the beginning as a land of refuge — is engaged in a broad debate over how welcoming it should be. Much of the debate in Congress has focused on specific questions, such as how to meet the labor needs of Western farmers who for years have depended upon illegal aliens to harvest fruits and vegetables. So far, much of the public attention has focused on illegal immigration.

50,000 OF
DOCUMENTED
Give me, your tired, your, poor,
GUEST WORKERS
your huddled masses, yearning to
breathe free, (ON A 2-YR TRIAL BASIS)
ILLEGAL ALIEN (HERE BEFORE JAN 1, 1981)
The wretched, refuse of your
teeming shore, GRANTED RENEWABLE-
TERM TEMPORARY RESIDENCE FOR A
PERIOD OF 10 YEARS.
Send these, the homeless,
COAST-GUARD INSPECTED
tempest-tossed, to me....
(UNLESS FROM CUBA & HAITI)
IMMIGRATION REFORM

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Although some people are convinced that porous borders that permit illegal entry are the most serious part of the immigration problem, there are other perspectives on which aspect of the issue most deserves attention, and what should be done. After all, the majority of immigrants arrive legally. Accordingly, public debate about immigration should be framed more broadly.

Admissions policies are shaped partly by arguments about how immigrants, legal and illegal, affect us and how they shape the character of our country. Decisions need to be made about whether America should remain a nation that invites a substantial amount of immigration.

Our history, including the recent and largely successful absorption of almost one million Vietnamese refugees, is testimony to America's assimilative capacity. Today, those who are concerned about the new wave of immigration say that recent newcomers are different, that they are not being assimilated so readily as in the past, and that they pose a threat to cultural unity.

To agree on an admissions policy, we need to consider not only how these newcomers affect us, but also the nature of their appeal for entry. Those fleeing desperate economic and social circumstances make a special claim on our sympathy. As the Refugee Act of 1980 recognized, people in such circumstances require special consideration. But how many refugees should we take? And on what basis should some be admitted and others excluded?

Finally, our admissions policy should reflect the importance that most Americans attach to the problem of illegal entry. Few people argue for an "open admissions" policy. But many advocate tighter controls over illegal entry. Various measures might be taken to deter the flow of illegal aliens—tighter border enforcement, internal inspection, denying certain services to illegals—but each is distasteful in certain ways. The debate is about how important it is to stem that tide of illegals, and about which measures to curtail it are acceptable.

In a broader sense, this is a discussion about differences—which are ennobling and invigorating, and which are divisive. "One of the conditions of being an American," says Arthur Mann, professor of history at the University of Chicago, "is to be aware of the fact that a whole lot of people around you are different—different in their origins, their religions, their life-styles." Those differences, a constant feature of American life, are at the center of the debate over immigration.

So far, the debate over immigration has mainly involved people who have a special interest in it. But something important is missing from the discussion if political leaders listen only to the petitions of special interest groups. It is essential that the public join this debate. In the long run, the laws that Congress passes will be effective only if they reflect the public's views about what our admissions policy should be.

When legal and illegal immigration are at low levels, it is easy for Americans to honor the country's history as a nation of immigrants. But faced with more applicants than we choose to admit, it is a challenging task to agree upon a realistic admissions policy that does not compromise our ideals.

For Further Reading

For an interesting account on recent immigration and its effects, see John Crewdson's *The Tarnished Door: The New Immigrants and the Transformation of America* (New York: Times Books, 1983). Various aspects of the issue are examined in *Clamor at the Gates: The New American Immigration*, edited by Nathan Glazer (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies Press, 1985).

Vernon M. Briggs, Jr., a Cornell University economist, analyzes both immigration law and the economic effects of immigration in *Immigration and the American Labor Force* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984).

For two different views on the impact of immigration, see David Reimers' *Still the Golden Door: The Third World Comes to America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); and *The Immigration Time Bomb*, by Governor Richard D. Lamm and Gary Imhoff (New York: Truman Talley/ E. P. Dutton Books, 1985).

Acknowledgments

Many people participated in the process of deciding upon this year's topics, discussing how they should be approached, preparing the materials, and reviewing their content. Once again this year, David Mathews and Daniel Yankelovich provided both guidance and support. Jon Kinghorn played an indispensable role in keeping the various parts of this far-flung network in touch with one another, and providing assistance of many kinds to the convening institutions and forum leaders.

For their comments and suggestions, we are indebted to Edwin Harwood and Gary Imhoff. For her help in introducing us to this issue, we thank Rifka Hirsch.

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44

2. Immigration: What We Promised, Where to Draw the Line

Now that you've had a chance to read the book or attend the discussion, we'd like to know what you think about this issue. Your thoughts and feeling about this issue, along with those of thousands of others who participated in this year's forums, will be reflected in a summary report prepared for policymakers and elected officials. Because we're interested in knowing how you've changed your mind, some questions are the same as those in the first questionnaire.

1. What priority do you think should be given to each of the following goals in efforts to reform our immigration system?

	High Priority	Lower Priority	Not a Priority	Not Sure
a. Reduce the number of immigrants who come to this country each year	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Make sure that no single ethnic or language group constitutes too large a portion of the total immigration to the U.S	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Admit a greater number of refugees fleeing from persecution	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Bring illegal immigration under control	☐	☐	☐	☐

2. Here are some things people have been saying about immigration at current levels. For each, indicate whether you agree or disagree:

	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
a. On balance, immigrants are good for our country; they work hard, and enrich our culture and economy	☐	☐	☐
b. We now take in about as many refugees as we can handle	☐	☐	☐
c. Recent immigrants are not assimilating as quickly as past waves of immigrants	☐	☐	☐
d. Considering our history as a nation of immigrants, we have an obligation to admit more immigrants than we do today	☐	☐	☐

3. Here are some things people have been saying about illegal immigration. For each, indicate whether you agree or disagree:

	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
a. Illegal (or undocumented) immigrants are a problem because they take jobs away from Americans	☐	☐	☐
b. Illegal immigrants are a problem because of the cost of the social services they use	☐	☐	☐
c. Illegal immigration is a problem because these immigrants have no rights and are often exploited	☐	☐	☐
d. Most illegal immigrants take jobs that Americans won't take	☐	☐	☐

(over)

4. The immigration reform proposals below all have certain costs. With the costs in mind, do you favor or oppose each of the following?

	Favor	Oppose	Not Sure
a. Provide more resources to the Immigration and Naturalization Service so that it can catch more illegal immigrants at the border — even if that means higher taxes	☐	☐	☐
b. Reduce the total number of immigrants we admit — even if that means turning away many refugees who are fleeing from persecution	☐	☐	☐
c. Admit immigrants regardless of national origin — even if that changes America's ethnic mix	☐	☐	☐
d. Give the INS broader authority to identify and arrest illegal immigrants — even if that means occasionally violating the rights of some Americans	☐	☐	☐
e. Let in more refugees who are fleeing from persecution — even if that means spending more on refugee benefits and services	☐	☐	☐

5. Which of these age groups are you in?

Under 18 ☐
18-29 ☐
30-44 ☐
45-64 ☐
65 and over ☐

6. Are you a

Man ☐
Woman ☐

7. What is your zip code? _____

8. We'd like to know whether, as you have read this book and attended the forums, you have changed your mind about immigrants and what our immigration policy should be. How, if at all, did you change your mind?

9. If there were just one message you could send to elected leaders on the topic of U.S. immigration policy, what would it be?

Please hand this questionnaire to the forum leader at the end of the session, or mail it to the National Issues Forum at 5335 Far Hills Avenue, Dayton, Ohio 45429.

"I know no safe
depository of the
ultimate powers
of the society but the
people themselves;
and if we think
them not enlightened
enough to exercise
their control with a
wholesome discretion,
the remedy is not
to take it
from them, but to
inform their discretion
by education."

Th. Jefferson